



The Italian Wife

Kate Furnivall

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Italy, 1932 -- Mussolini's Italy is growing from strength to strength, but at what cost?

One bright autumn morning, architect Isabella Berotti sits at a café in the vibrant centre of Bellina, when a woman she's never met asks her to watch her ten-year-old daughter, just for a moment. Reluctantly, Isabella agrees -- and then watches in horror as the woman climbs to the top of the town's clock tower and steps over the edge.

This tragic encounter draws vivid memories to the surface, forcing Isabella to probe deeper into the secrets of her own past as she tries to protect the young girl from the authorities. Together with charismatic photographer Roberto Falco, Isabella is about to discover that secrets run deeper, and are more dangerous, than either of them could have possibly imagined . . .

From the glittering marble piazzas, to the picturesque hillside villages and winding streets of Rome, Kate Furnivall's epic new novel will take you on an breathtaking journey of intrigue, romance and betrayal.

The Italian Wife Details

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Author : Kate Furnivall

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From Reader Review The Italian Wife for online ebook

Stacie says

Fans of Kate Furnivall's **THE RUSSIAN CONCUBINE** will be thrilled to be wrapped up in her next novel, set in Mussolini's Italy. Isabella Berotti is a widow, after her husband, a Blackshirt in Mussolini's army, was shot and killed. Ten years later, Isabella is now an architect, building for one of the new Italian communities after the draining of the Pontine Marshes. While sitting at a cafe during a beautiful autumn morning, a woman approaches Isabella and asks her to watch her daughter for a moment, briefly mentioning her dead husband. Isabella then watches the woman step off the edge of a tower to her death. Isabella is determined to find out the connection between this woman and her husband. A photographer, working for Mussolini's government, documents the woman's death and agrees to help Isabella figure out their connection and protect the child left behind.

Even though this is a fictional account of Mussolini's regime, it is based on factual events. Furnivall's research is thorough and tells a spell-binding story of greed, control, and betrayal. It is both suspenseful and emotional. I was fairly uneducated about Mussolini's reign during the 1930's and was appalled by the similarities to Hitler and his brutality.

Isabella was an impressive woman, working as an architect during a time when women were not valued beyond motherhood in society. Isabella was fiercely loyal to her father, her husband, and to her country. As she realizes the destruction and deception happening in her community she risks everything to get to the bottom of it.

Roberto, the photographer, has a dark past, but becomes Isabella's confidant and partner while they try to find out who is behind the corruption. Other secondary characters are well-developed, offering key insights and adding to the development of the story.

The descriptions of Italy and the architectural designs are vividly described. The plot develops quickly and each chapter adds another layer that will keep you turning the pages. The romance that develops between two characters doesn't dominate the story, but yet enhances it by Furnivall's details. **THE ITALIAN WIFE** grabs your attention from the start and holds it until the final page is turned.

Favorite Quote: "We all keep secrets. We hide our secrets from each other. From ourselves. But how do we know when the time has come to undo the locks on the secrets?" Page 235

Michelle Heatley says

A Novel That Will Take Your Breath Away

The Italian Wife is a novel by Kate Furnivall set in the 1930's when Mussolini's ambition for a modern Italy was all consuming. Isabella Berotti fought through loss and despair to become an architect bringing Il Duce's dream of building new towns the Pontine Marshes into reality. Her life is turned upside down when a young girl, Rosa, is thrust into her care the moment before the girl's mother leaps to her death. Isabella's certainty of the future she is building begins to crumble as she fights to protect Rosa.

Kate's consummate storytelling is filled with the sights and sounds of Italy, but underneath there is a darkness and fear that pervades all aspects of the Fascist regime, sucking the reader into this epic story.

Isabella is taken from the security of her job her home and takes a leap into an uncertain future, a future that will free Rosa and a future where she learns to love again.

Kate's novels always take me into a times and places that I would not have thought and always leave me wanting more. I can't wait for her next novel.

Camille says

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book for free through a Goodreads First Reads giveaway. Thank you to the publisher for sending this book.

The rating is more a 3.5 than a 3, rounded down to 3. Overall, I really enjoyed this book. I was bothered by a few things, but I would probably read it again. It is one of these compelling historical fiction novels that make you want to keep reading.

The Good Points

- I really like the historical setting of the story. The novel is set in the Agro Pontino during the dictatorship of Mussolini. While I am familiar with Mussolini, I knew nothing about the Pontine Marshes and the building of cities there. I also appreciated the little historical explanation that was added after the novel.
- As mentioned earlier, it is very compelling and "unputdownable".
- I didn't expect some of the plots in the story, especially towards the end as things were brought to a close. I like to be surprised by the plot.

The Not So Good Points

- I noticed on three occasions that things were repeated twice in the story. (view spoiler) It might just have been me remembering these things, some readers might not notice at all. I don't like being told the same thing twice as I feel like the author doesn't trust me to remember.
- Isabella (the main character)'s attitude annoyed me at one point, as she keeps pushing to know things she isn't meant to know. While she has a right to know the truth and I understand she wants to know what people are hiding from her, she lives in a Fascist state. You don't just push people around without fear of consequences!
- There was too much drama revolving around Isabella's beautiful black curls. I get it, she has nice hair. Let's move on already.
- There are a lot of coincidences happening that help to resolve some of the characters' problems. (view spoiler)
- (view spoiler)

Finally (and this has *nothing* to do with the author or her writing!), I really don't get the cover. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the story...

Kathe Coleman says

The Italian Wife by Kate Furnill

Set in Italy in the 1930's when Mussolini's grand plan was to drain the Pontine Marshes, the Argo Pontino in order to construct five opulent and architecturally superior towns. Isabella Berotti was a young widow of a

“blackshirt” who diligently worked to become the only women architect in the area. As she is sitting at a café reminiscing about her painful past when a women asks her to watch her daughter promising to return shortly but she does not and Isabella is left to find out the truth about the girl and how she is connected to her life all the while the fear of Mussolini fascist regime ever present. Well developed characters and could taste the picturesque village and rolling hills of Italy. I would rate her books on the level of Diane Chamberlain. . . very enjoyable read. 4 stars

Jill's Book Cafe says

Set in 1932, the Italian Wife of the title is Isabella Berotti who was widowed ten years earlier when her Blackshirt husband Luigi was fatally shot. Isabella was also shot in the back and her life was irrevocably changed not just by her physical injuries, but by the mental scars she can't escape.

The catalyst that brings the past firmly to the fore is a meeting as she "sits at a café in the vibrant centre of Bellina, when a woman she's never met asks her to watch her ten-year-old daughter, just for a moment. Reluctantly, Isabella agrees -- and then watches in horror as the woman climbs to the top of the town's clock tower and steps over the edge"

The incident is also witnessed by Roberto Falco the photographer for the local Fascist Party. It brings the two together to discover what brought about her suicide and why her daughter Rosa, is so important to the local Fascist Party Leader. It also appears to be intrinsically linked to the murder of Isabella's husband, a topic that the Fascist Party are reluctant to discuss.

Not only is this book and enjoyable read it is a fascinating insight into the cult of Mussolini and a particular aspect of Italian history I had no knowledge of. As Isabella is an architect she has been employed to work on the emerging town of Bellini. While Bellini is a fictional construct it is based on the real life "towns" that Mussolini built during his ambitious plan to drain and reclaim the Pontine Marches. It is a period when it was safe to say you could trust no-one and the Fascist Party literally had eyes and ears everywhere.

The book has a strong plot that really draws you in and has you rooting for the good guys, even though sometimes you're never quite who they are. As characters Isabella and Roberto are realistic and believable which means you really want to know what happens to them and whether they can discover the truth about Luigi's murder, Rosa's mothers suicide and the fate of Rosa and her father.

It is a book that successfully combines history, mystery, intrigue and romance and I'm happy to recommend it.

I received an ARC via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Emma Crowley says

Kate Furnivall's latest release The Italian Wife is easily her best yet. I feel like I say that whenever I read one of her books but it is true with this her eighth release. Kate is an author who can turn her hand to any setting or time in history and taking us back to Mussolini's rule in 1930's Italy certainly proved an eye opener for me. With one of the best opening chapters I have read in a long time, you are instantly drawn into the

intriguing story of young architect Isabella Berotti. Kate's books are exciting to read and a superb story always unravels but this one was extra special. This multi-layered epic was packed full of mystery and suspense, real edge of your seat stuff as Isabella becomes embroiled in the story of a young girl named Rosa and the search for her own husband's killer.

Isabella is living in Bellina with her father, ten years years on from the shooting which killed her husband Luigi and left her childless and suffering from damage to her back and leg. This incident has had a profound effect on her and she knows someone out there must have some clues as to why her adored husband was shot. Yes he was one of Mussolini's Blackshirts but Isabella feels the root cause runs deeper. Even though Isabella had been through so much heartache and suffering I felt she was all the better for it as the events of the book would make a lesser woman crumble. Instead she uses every ounce of her energy to stand up to a cruel regime and find out the truth whether what she discovers will be to her liking or not. Having taken the day off on the anniversary of the shooting Isabella is sitting in a café when a woman approaches her saying she knows something about Luigi's killer. Before she knows it the woman has jumped from a tower designed by Isabella leaving her young daughter Rosa behind. Isabella is left shocked and confused but torn in two she wants to know the truth about the incident so many years ago but also she knows Rosa cannot be left alone in this ever changing world.

Isabella begins the search for the truth, a journey which is filled with numerous twists and turns all of which kept me guessing as to the final outcome. Also it is a time of darkness and fear as hidden secrets come to light. She soon comes to realise she is part of a much bigger picture and she is merely a pawn in a huge game. Danger, unrest and betrayal are behind every corner as Isabella and handsome photographer Robert Falco do their best to uncover Rosa's background and avenge Luigi's death. The more I became engrossed in the story and Isabella's determination to reveal the truth the more I realised she was a woman ahead of her time, a strong, determined woman who stands up for what she believes in. This was at a time when a women's place was believed to be in the home producing more children to further the Italian people and make the country more powerful.

The author just really built and built upon the tension in the story I was desperate to know the history of Rosa and what connection she had to Isabella if any. There were so many layers to this story that I lost all sense of time and place as I couldn't read quick enough. Throughout the novel we see Isabella bloom and she opens herself up more to love and life after her husbands death. This sums up perfectly the way we see a change occur within Isabella. 'He had dragged her out of the safe numb state that she had wrapped around herself like a shell, he had cracked it wide open and brought her grasping into his warm, sensitive and passionate world but she had not been prepared for this version of love'

Kate Furnivall has the magic touch when it comes to writing historical fiction, she is adept at drawing you in right from the very first word. I felt as if I already knew these characters and was invested in a successful outcome for all concerned. There was no laborious setting up that can last for at least 150-200 pages in some books, the action started in chapter one and never stopped until the last paragraph. Packed full of historical information that was not overpowering but just made the story jump from the pages. The fact that the majority of what happened in the story is based on fact is amazing. Yes the town of Bellina is fictional but Mussolini did clear marshy swampland in order to build new towns and farmland to further his country and make them self sufficient in agricultural production. He ruled with an iron fist which emanated from the pages, his propaganda was unrelenting and one thing surprised me was that people were not allowed to gather in large numbers unless it was organised by the Fascist party itself. The scene where Mussolini was speaking at an outdoor rally was just brilliantly written. All the fear, panic and desperation at what occurs got me right in the heart. Often we never get to actually read of important historical figures interacting with the main characters. They are more spoken about and feared but here when Mussolini visits the architects office

and Isabella stands up to him was a fantastic scene. The tension oozed from the page you just knew Isabella's legs were shaking and the sweat dripping down her back.

People who have no interest in history or do not know much about Mussolini's time in power would do well to read *The Italian Wife*. Kate Furnivall has captured the essence of the time and written a book full of conflict, courage and emotion that has stayed with me long after I finished the last page. This book would make a stunning film as the scenes from the last quarter of the book were like something from a big screen blockbuster. I would love to see this happen in the future. Don't stop what you are doing Kate Furnivall this reader can't wait to see what country and time in history you will take us to next.

Lara Maynard says

The Italian Wife is a little outside of my reading comfort zone because of its commercial fiction/romance genre leanings, but its setting and historical fiction aspect appealed to me. I learned a little more about Fascist Italy in the 1930s (and afterwards through Furnivall's author's note at the back). The creation of five towns in the would-be Bread Basket of Rome was news to me, and prompted me to do a little more research online as I read the book and afterwards. I love it when a work of fiction makes me want to check out the facts, so the book scores points with me there.

The protagonist, Isabella, is also interesting. She is, I imagine, a complete fiction: a female architect working under Mussolini's grand Agro Pontini development scheme. Other characters add to the historical side of the fiction and the conflict and drama of the story: Blackshirts, Communist rebels, carabinieri. Some are clearly "bad guys," but Furnivall makes a marked (if sometimes overly so) effort to add shades of grey. And, rather boldly, Il Duce himself makes an appearance.

The love story made me wince a bit on occasion, but I know others lap that stuff up and try not to be to judgey (not strictly a word, I know, yet it says what I mean). And again, Furnivall makes a clear effort at balancing a strong female character with a hero man love interest. Even her ending is expected, pat and tidy with a just a little messy thrown in. She blends stuff that could make feminists pissed off with enough subversion to maybe throw us off. So kudos to Kate for that, too.

OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/th...>

The Italian Wife
By Kate Furnivall
ISBN: 9780751550764
Author Website: <http://www.katefurnivall.com/>
Brought to you by OBS reviewer Kayt

Synopsis:

Italy, 1932 — Mussolini's Italy is growing from strength to strength, but at what cost?

One bright autumn morning, architect Isabella Berotti sits at a café in the vibrant centre of Bellina, when a woman she's never met asks her to watch her ten-year-old daughter, just for a moment. Reluctantly, Isabella agrees — and then watches in horror as the woman climbs to the top of the town's clock tower and steps over the edge.

This tragic encounter draws vivid memories to the surface, forcing Isabella to probe deeper into the secrets of her own past as she tries to protect the young girl from the authorities. Together with charismatic photographer Roberto Falco, Isabella is about to discover that secrets run deeper, and are more dangerous, than either of them could have possibly imagined . . .

From the glittering marble piazzas, to the picturesque hillside villages and winding streets of Rome, Kate Furnivall's epic new novel will take you on a breathtaking journey of intrigue, romance and betrayal.

Review:

The Italian Wife is set in 1932 in the midst of Mussolini's hunger for a new Fascist Italy. In a fictional town named Bellina, a sixth city to the five this leader had built after draining Italy's Pontine Marshes in the 30s. It was an engineering feat that actually employed 124,000 men in 1933. In this intriguing tale, a woman Isabella Berotti is one of the famed architect. She was married to one of Mussolini's infamous soldiers, the Blackshirts. Ten years before this her husband Luigi was shot and killed in front of her and she was shot in the back. This story starts with this horrific event. Isabella was changed forever by the attack and not just physically.

Ten years after her life was changed, it was again directly changed this time by a young girl. A woman with wild hair comes up to her as Isabella is relaxing at a café in front of her triumph in architect a clock tower. The lady tells her she knows she is a good person and would she watch her young daughter Rosa for a few moments. As the lady leaves, she says something to Isabella that changes everything. She hints at knowledge of Luigi's killers. When the woman climbs the clock tower and jumps to her death, everything changes. Also witnessing this tragedy is photographer Roberto Falco, who is documenting the work of the local Fascists.

These two people, Isabella and Roberto are drawn into a mystery that is not only dangerous, but could be the end of them. Author Kate Furnivall pulls the reader in with these imperfect and brave characters. The research she has done is amazing. The scenes come to life in her colorful writing. Twists and turns and things all tied in together take the reader on a wild ride. All of the characters and scenes are written so descriptively and full of intensity. The plot is not only strong, but immensely action packed.

The Italian Wife is a wonderfully written novel of love, romance, suspense, mystery and intrigue. This book would appeal to readers of romance, mystery and historical fiction. I loved the insight this author gave into the demons of Mussolini's men and the way they controlled so much even in everyday life. The twists and turns were surprising, but fell in place perfectly. This is an entertaining and well written novel that keeps the reader drawn in and never let's go. The extra information the author has into her research is also very interesting. A fabulous read for anyone.

Nicole says

I don't think I've ever read a book that took place in Mussolini's Italy, so this was really interesting to read. And I'd never heard of the Pontine Marshes at all, so the whole idea of building a town where swamp used to

be was really neat.

I didn't like this as much as I've liked some of Kate Furnivall's other stuff though. The motivation was a bit dodgy to me: Isabella is like one-track-mind level obsessed with finding out why her husband was shot 10 years ago, despite the fact that he was a blackshirt and that these things just happened sometimes.

The ending felt very ~convenient~. Not necessarily unsatisfying, but just kind of unbelievable in the context of the rest of the story.

But all three main characters were very likable and sympathetic, and everything moved along at a nice pace.

Suze says

Very exciting look into Mussolini's Italy, Blackshirts and all. I found this book impossible to put down!

I immediately liked the lead character, Isabella Berotti, an architect when female architects were a rarity. A strong woman, though grievously wounded earlier in her life, she strode through life with a purpose, in spite of the many drawbacks in working for the fascist government.

I was fascinated by all of the characters, as they all made an impression, whether it be admiration or hatred. The historical aspect was very well researched also, which is why Kate Furnivall is one of my favorite authors.

The background topic, Mussolini's grand plan to drain the Pontine Marshes to build 5 towns and provide land for farming, was **very** interesting. I love learning when I read for enjoyment!

Very highly recommended!!

Margi says

This was a fascinating read set in Italy during Mousolini's dictatorship. A time, place and events I knew little about, but now more enlightened. This was the 1st book of Kate Furnival's that I have read and it was a real page turner. I couldn't put it down. I can highly recommend this book.

Toni Osborne says

Set in Mussolini's Italy in the early 1930's, this well- researched novel clearly reflects a society where you needed to keep your thoughts to yourself and your actions well-guarded. The sense of unease, mistrust and fear resonates throughout this story. This novel is much more than an historical fiction it is one that relives a piece of history.

Isabella Berotti is the heroine, a female architect employed to work on Bellina (fictional city), on Pontine Marshes. Draining of the marches and the construction of new towns was part of Mussolini's grand plan, a risky idealistic vision to silence the unrest among the veterans of the Great War and give them employment.

Benito Mussolini breathtaking ambition stormed through all obstacles. He knew the value of propaganda and demonstrates the success and power of Fascism.....but at what cost. His Blackshirts and secret police terrorized the population....

Isabella has been haunted for the past 10 years since her husband Luigi a Blackshirt and a devoted Il Duce follower was shot and killed. Maimed in the shooting and losing the child she was carrying left her with emotional scars ever since. Till one day a woman stopped her and asked Isabella to look after Rosa, her daughter. Moments later the woman jumped to her death and Isabella's life changed for ever. Roberto Falco, a photographer employed to capture images of the creation of the new town comes into Isabella's life. Together they fight the establishments to uncover the truth behind her husband's murder and the child left in her care.

I am a huge fan of this author, what I love most of all is her sweeping settings and the way she transports us to another part of the world and into another time. No confusion about her settings, you could picture them clearly. Her characters are likable and quite complex, each with their own story and dark secrets. Isabella is tormented by her past and she is not able to let go till she finds out the truth about that fateful day. Rosa is the key to finding the answer but Mussolini's fascist regime block her at every turn. Roberto eventually finds a place in Isabella's heart.....

What a good escapist passing time with "The Italian Wife", it is easy to get lost in the story and enjoy every moment. It is a wonderfully written novel of suspense, mystery and intrigue sparkled with love and romance to soften the blows. The twist and turns were surprising and well placed. The plot is strong and entertaining, and has kept my attention till the very last page.

Agi says

I have never read any Kate Furnivall's books before, really don't know why, but when I started reading this novel, I was totally lost in this story - only after the first few sentences and one of the most gripping, hooking opening chapters ever. I also heard a lot of fantastic opinions about Kate's books, and after reading this one I know why people love her stories so much. She has just won a new avid reader and fan in my person.

Isabella Berotti is a widow, living with her father in Bellina, one of the towns made from scratch on Mussolini's orders, and working as an architect. Ten years ago her husband, one of the biggest henchmen of Mussolini, has been murdered, and Isabella has been shot, too, but she survived. This accident has left her childless, and also crippled as she suffered a damage to her leg and back. On the tenth anniversary of the murder Isabella is, as usually on this day, sitting in a cafe, when young woman with a little girl approaches her. First she tells her she knows who's responsible for her husband's killing, then she tell Isabelle to take care of her girl for a few minutes and then she disappears, only to be seen minutes later on a top of a tower that Isabella designed, and then jumping down.

Isabella is shocked, but the woman's words has left its impact and she is now desperate to find out more about her husband's death. She knows that the answer can be Rosa, but the girl has been separated from her in the convent and Isabella is not allowed access to her. But the regime and people working for it don't know how desperate Isabella is in her search for truth, but Isabella also doesn't realise how cruel and corrupt the politics is, and that she herself can out herself in real danger. But with a help of a town photographer, Roberto Falco, Isabella is determined to reveal all the secrets.

I liked Isabella instantly. Yes, she might have married Luigi, one of the Mussolini's Blackshirts, known for their cruelty, but she was a young girl then and she believed in her husband and the idea of better Italy. But still, she was always able to see what's really behind the promises and stayed true to her beliefs. And she was clever, she quickly realised that the things weren't either only white or only black, that there is much more to the truth, and yet she was not scared to dig further and further, as far as to being alone in one room with Mussolini and saying "no" to his advances. The more I got to know Isabella, the more respect I had for her, especially as she lived in times when woman was expected to stay at home and produce six or seven bambinis, and not meddle into politics.

I was absolutely fascinated by all the other characters, I adored them or disliked them totally, and more than often I admired Isabella's diplomacy when interacting with some of the Fascist. They were brilliantly portrayed, as well as their views, and I so wanted Isabella to find the truth, to wipe the smirk off all those arrogant faces in the town - hah.

It was hard for me to get into the book, as I had a feeling that there are much too many descriptions that distracts the attention from what was really important, and as much as Kate's language and the way of writing are beautiful, I couldn't focus on the context, on the plot, there was just too much stuff that was for me not insignificant, maybe not so important. Of course I love descriptions of places, the books wouldn't be half so great without them, but here it was just too much stress on architecture, nature, details and I couldn't wait for the right action to begin. But it's the only thing that bothered me, other than that this story was exceptional!

This story is set in this part of history that doesn't belong to my favourite one, and also that I don't know much about, I admit. But Kate Furnivall has done it - she has really evoke my interest and I read the book with red cheeks - so exciting it all was. I didn't know what was true or what was fiction, because I had no idea that there was a time when five towns were MADE in Italy, and why they were made like this, and what was the result and consequences for people who were chosen to be moved to those towns, and it was a great new experience for me. It was like a fantastic, colourful lesson in history. Also, after the story ended, Kate explained why this interest in this particular period in history, and about those towns, and it cleared the situation much more for me.

What's more, the author has incredibly brilliantly captured the atmosphere of those terror times - the tension and fear was palpable through the pages, the people were always living in fear, the insecurity in their lives was described so vividly, they couldn't be sure of the day or the hour. It's for sure not easy to write about those things so literally and yet being able to not make the book depressing or sad.

Everything in this book has its place, there where it belongs. The mystery about Rosa is one of the main plots here and I really appreciate the great job Kate has done with it, as yes, we are incredibly curious how it's going to end but there is so much happening in between, before everything is explained that we don't have much time to wonder about the truth. So as much as this mystery is one of the main point in this book, it's not too overwhelming, but on the other hand it has you on your tenterhooks, have you gnawing your nails, when you're accompanying Isabella and young Rosa in their searches - for a husband's killer and for a father.

Also the romance, even though it's not the main thread in this book, is written with such a feeling and gentleness, and it doesn't overwhelm or it doesn't outshine the main sub - plot, but it adds so much to the book, it feels so realistic, and I loved to see how it blossoms, and how difficult it is for both the characters.

There is an incredibly number of twists and turns in this story, when Isabella starts to search for the truth and slowly reveals it. I might have guess at some point the truth about Rosa but still, it didn't make the reading

less exciting or less thrilling, oh no, and in any case, I was not totally sure if I'm right, and the author has also made the truth much more shocking than I expected. There were so many layers to the story, and as the author started to unveiling them slowly, one by one, I couldn't stop but gasp with surprise, fear or admiration.

The book is brilliantly researched. I really didn't have an idea that it was a fact that new towns were ordered by Mussolini and that they were built from scratch, and that people were being uprooted and brought on trains to make the towns run, and when they weren't able to do that, they were then of course punished. Spies, blackmail, bribes dominated those times, and Kate brilliantly captured this all and wonderfully, vividly put this on paper. I also absolutely adored the scenes with Mussolini himself, I have no idea how he was privately, but I'm guessing that the author has also grasped the right spirit and described him just as he was. I am so glad that I was able to read this book, to learn something new.

It is a book about courage and about staying true to yourself and your own beliefs. It's going to capture your attention from the very beginning to the end, and the characters and events are going to stay with you for longer. It has an exceptional, unique plot, very strong and vivid characters and it is written in such a way that you're really not sure who you should trust and who not, and you desperately want to know the truth. It's the prefect mix of history, mystery, wonderful, exceptional romance, trust and intrigue, set in very interesting times and place. Highly recommended!

Copy received from publisher in exchange for a review.

? jamieson ? says

well I tried to read something different. I tried to read NOT ONLY an adult book but ALSO a historical fiction. **last fucking time I do that ???** well not really, I'll keep digging. But this is NOT the start to the 'lets branch out' campaign I wanted.

The Italian Wife is set in Italy during the Mussolini era. Our main character, Isabelle, is an architect who's husband Luigi died ten years ago in a shooting. After a girl called Rosa comes into her care, Isabelle must uncover the secrets of her and Rosa's past.

I think this book just wasn't for me. The setting should have been really interesting but I ended up feeling pretty disinterested. I feel like I didn't mesh with the writing and I ended up finding it hard to imagine the setting. The characters didn't do anything for me. I didn't feel attached to Isabelle much and while I liked Rosa more, she wasn't in it enough.

The only bit I was surprisingly invested in was the romance, and I think that was pretty sweet. I enjoyed it. For that I have this 2 stars. I didn't even end up properly finishing this, I skimmed the last 100 pages. But everything I guessed would happen did happen and that predictability was kind of a let down too.

I don't really have anything else to say about this. Just wasn't my thing.

READ FOR: Marvel-A-Thon - Read a book that will challenge you

Dinah Jefferies says

Kate Furnivall is an enchantress whose love story, *The Italian Wife*, is set against the full of horror of Mussolini's Italy. Hooked from the very first chapter, I adored being swept deeper and deeper into 1930s Italy. I had intended to take a peek, and then save the rest of the book for my upcoming holiday but, despite being bang in the middle of edits for my own third novel, I had to read on. *The Italian Wife* is the definition of a terrifically well written page-turner.

The location is brilliantly drawn; I could picture the fictional town of Bellina as clearly as if I'd lived there all my life. I'd never heard of the Pontine Marshes before, so was intrigued to learn about Mussolini's daring vision for the place. But the novel is so much more than a fascinating location. Full of dark secrets, you can smell the fear as Mussolini's Blackshirts stalk the streets - who can you trust, when anyone could be an informer? How can you tell?

There's a wonderful symmetry to the novel too. The way it starts: the way it ends. The plot builds perfectly, layer by layer, as it develops the relationships between Isabella, Roberto and little Rosa. These are characters guaranteed to live in your heart and in your mind. So my advice is this: clear the decks, turn off the phone, and allow yourself to be captivated by a story that grips from the start, and doesn't let go until the last tear has been shed. I loved it and long to read Kate's next novel.

Judith Spencer says

Yet another page turner from Kate. It is a fascinating insight into Mussolini and his regime, and very well researched.

The story gripped me from the very first page when Isabella an architect is sitting in a cafe, and a woman asks her to look after her child for a few minutes, only to discover she commits suicide from a building she designed.

The story has all kinds of twists and turns, and delves into Isabella's past when her husband was shot dead, and she was injured, and she sets out to find out the truth with a photographer Roberta who she discovers also has a past.

Kate always manages to transport her reader into a different time and place, she does this so effortlessly I so want to go and visit this area, I can already taste the limoncello!

Kim says

The book is set in Italy when Mussolini was working to drain the Pontine Marshes to make 5 very superior towns. Isabella Berottie is an architect at a time when they were mainly male. She lost her husband 10 years ago. He was a 'blackshirt'.

Her life is set to be turned upside down for a second time when a young mother asks her to look after her daughter for a few moments- but then commits suicide jumping from the clock tower. She'd said she had some information about her husband. As she tries to protect the girl she is drawn into a swirling world. A photographer for the local fascist party helps and they discover secrets that link back to her husband's murder.

An era I knew nothing about and the sights and smells of Italy were so well drawn you could imagine yourself immersed in this story.

With many thanks to the publisher and Net Galley for a copy of this book.

Dale Harcombe says

This is a story of Italy under Mussolini, something I admit to knowing little about. The story starts in 1922 when Isabella Berotti's husband was killed and she was severely wounded, leaving her with pain, a permanent limp and a lot of questions. Ten years later Isabella is an architect, something very rare for a woman back in that time and country. She has been working on the created town of Bellina. While relaxing in a café, a woman brings her a child and asks her to keep an eye on her. The woman then climbs to the top of Bellina's clock tower and throws herself off. Along with photographer Roberto Falco, Isabella discovers secrets that put her and Roberto in danger as well as the child, Rosa. Some of the story is brutal and gives a good picture of the lengths people will go to achieve their aims and to cover-up the past.

I really enjoyed the characters of Isabella and Roberto. I also enjoyed the setting. My first book by this author, I would be interested to read another. This one kept my interest throughout, although I did think things did seem to get a bit far-fetched towards the end.

Incy Black says

Kate Furnivall is my go-to author when I crave something layered, pensive and atmospheric (setting), and she did not disappoint, not in any way.

The Italian Wife is more an experience than a read. You live the stink of corruption, feel the weight of the dictatorship, taste the suppressed anger, and thrill at the subtle acts of revolt--Yes, greater acts of rebellion occur as the plot builds, but its the every day ones against the ever present threat of punishment, that get you cheering.

Isabella, the heroine: courageous, intelligent, committed, she's a fighter... Wonderful.

Roberto, the quiet hero: deliciously subversive to the core albeit subtly.

Secondary characters: a solid mix, some colourful, and some cruel, viciously so.

Plot: fully layered, multi-layered, tense, rewarding climax.

Setting: original and convincing, brilliantly textured.

I loved this book!

Felix says

This is a nice book and it held my interest steadily till its rather unrealistic happyendish conclusion. Some suspension of disbelief is necessary, but it's worthwhile. Chick-lit meets historical fiction here and inherits some of the better features of both.
