



Michelle Smart

One Enchanted

**CAMBRIDGE
NIGHT**

MILLS & BOON

MODERN

Kate Gray knotted her fingers together as the car that had collected her from work drove through the beautiful streets she was lucky enough to call home. Usually she would gaze with delight at the historic buildings and vibrant open spaces that made Cambridge its own unique place on the map but anxiety gnawed too deeply for her to appreciate anything today.

Matteo Cerlino, the man who had brought such joy and sunshine into her life, had spent a long weekend with his family in Tuscany. Kate had not been invited.

That morning he had messaged her – not called – to ask her to meet him that evening. He had something he wished to discuss with her.

She supposed she should have seen the writing on the wall. They were such different people. Matteo was a businessman who'd invested in the Life Science company where Kate was a research scientist...He had pursued her with a zeal that had stolen her breath then stolen her heart. But it was a relationship doomed from the start. She'd just been too swept-up in the romance to realize.

The only consolation she could grasp at was she had never confessed her love to him.

The car stopped. As she stepped out, she gazed around in confusion. She'd assumed his driver was taking her to Matteo's house but she'd been brought to one of Cambridge's pretty boatyards on the River Cam.

Her heart skipped to see Matteo, long legs striding towards her, thick dark hair gleaming under the late-afternoon sun, his crisp white shirt open at the neck.

Familiar warmth coiled through her veins. Self-conscious that she hadn't even had time to brush her blonde hair, she tucked a stray lock behind her ear.

He hooked an arm around her waist and pulled her in for a kiss. '*Amore*, you look beautiful,' he murmured. 'I have missed you.'

She gazed into the soulful brown eyes that could turn from brightness to desire in a heartbeat and her pulse soared.

‘Why are we here?’ she asked when she’d caught her breath. The gnawing doubts had dissipated a little but doubts about their longevity *always* dissipated when she was with him. When with Matteo, her heart ruled.

He flashed his white teeth at her. ‘You once told me that in your eight years of living in this beautiful city you had not taken a trip on the river. This evening, we are rectifying that. Come, *Amore*.’

Taking her hand, he led her down the steps to where a smart man in a boater hat and waistcoat stood by a punt. Introducing himself as their guide, he helped Kate and Matteo onto it.

They sat at the front end on the cushioned seat. A large hamper had been placed on the flat-bottomed floor.

Matteo stretched his legs out and pulled Kate to him.

In moments, the guide had his pole in the water and was pushing them away from the bank.

Stunned and relieved at this unexpected gesture from the man she had only minutes ago been certain was about to end their relationship, Kate sighed to feel the warmth of the sun on her face and the solidity of Matteo holding her so close. He smelled of that wonderful scent that was uniquely his and which she always hungered for.

Truth be told, she hungered for *him*. Matteo had brought her to life in ways she had never dreamed possible for a studious woman like her.

Moving at a gentle pace, the guide punted them under the beautiful King’s College Bridge, past vibrant bars where thirsty workers and tourists were enjoying an early-evening

drink and meandered past the stunning Queen's College and its irresistible mix of medieval and modern architecture.

As they left the bustle of the city itself, Kate dipped the hand not being held tightly by Matteo's into the refreshing water. Huge weeping willows and other trees she didn't recognize lined this part of the river in abundance, forming a canopy over them in places that temporarily blocked the sun's rays. She smiled contentedly to see a family of ducks swimming along the bank in tandem with their punt.

It wasn't until the trees thinned again and they were surrounded by meadowland, the sky around the setting sun a glorious pink that Matteo opened the hamper. She spotted a huge punnet of fat, ripe strawberries and other delicious morsels within it but it was the bottle of champagne he plucked out and raised aloft with a grin. As he uncorked it, Kate spotted an otter swimming towards them in. From this distance it looked as if it were smiling too.

After they'd chinked their glasses together, Matteo stared at her, the illumination in his eyes turning to solemnity.

'*Amore...*' he began with a tentativeness she had never heard from her self-assured lover before.

She took another sip of the delicious bubbly liquid in an attempt to quell the acceleration of her heartbeat.

'The six months I have spent with you have been the best of my life. When I invested in your company... I never thought I would meet the woman I would want to spend the rest of my life with.'

From his trouser pocket, Matteo pulled out a small black velvet box. He popped the lid to reveal a solitaire diamond ring.

‘This ring belonged to my grandmother. I visited my parents this weekend to ask their permission to give it to you.’ He took a long breath. ‘Kate Gray, will you marry me?’

The pounding of Kate’s heart was so hard its beats pulsed through her belly and echoed through her head. ‘You want to *marry* me?’

‘More than I have ever wanted anything. I love you, *Amore*, with all my heart.’

She stared deep into chocolate eyes ringing with sincerity and suddenly felt certain her own heart was set to explode. So many emotions were shooting through her she had to fight to say the words she had bitten back for months, ‘I love you too. I love you with all my heart.’

‘And will you...?’

Close by came the lyrical call of a bird in song. Its melody dove into Kate’s expanding joyous heart.

‘Marry you? Yes. A hundred times, yes!’

Forgetting the glass still in her hand, she threw her arms around Matteo’s neck, showering them with champagne. The golden liquid mingled with the deep kisses that sealed their happiness. It was a taste that would bring them back to this moment on the River Cam for the rest of their lives.

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