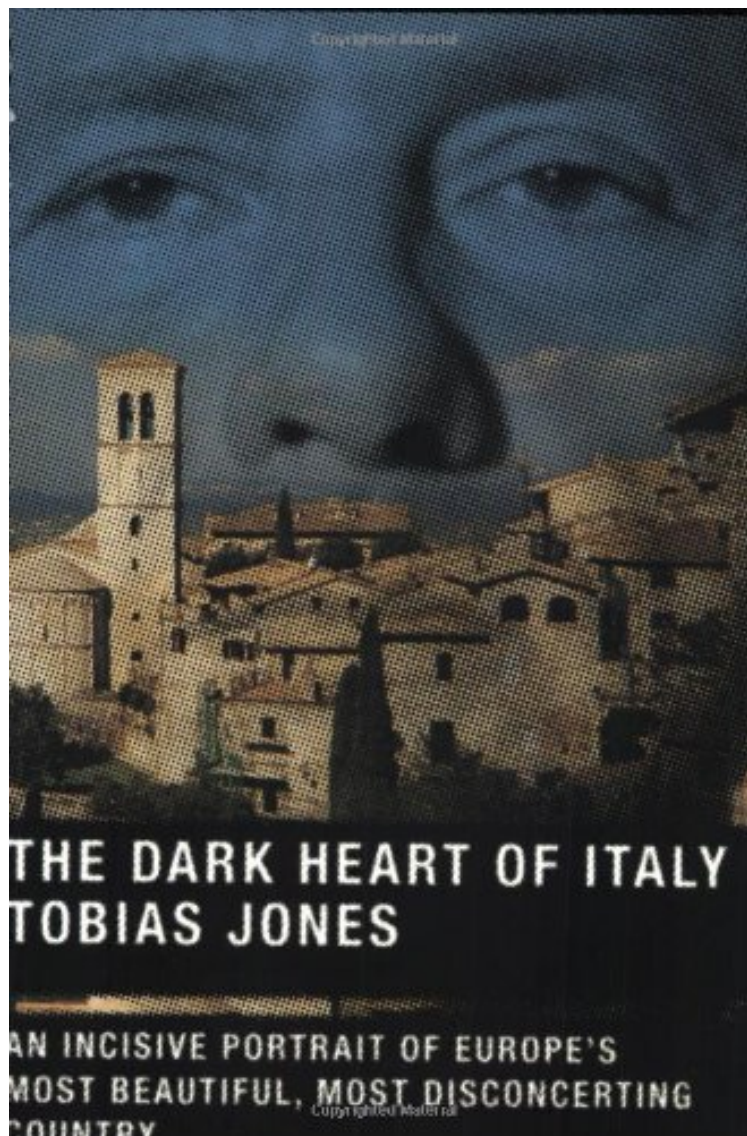


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## The Dark Heart of Italy: An Incisive Portrait of Europe's Most Beautiful, Most Disconcerting Country

*Tobias Jones*

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**Tobias Jones : The Dark Heart of Italy: An Incisive Portrait of Europe's Most Beautiful, Most Disconcerting Country** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dark Heart of Italy: An Incisive Portrait of Europe's Most Beautiful, Most Disconcerting Country:

In 1999 Tobias Jones immigrated to Italy, expecting to discover the pastoral bliss described by centuries of foreign visitors. Instead, he found a very different country: one besieged by unfathomable terrorism and deep-seated paranoia. *The Dark Heart of Italy* is Jones's account of his four-year voyage across the Italian peninsula. Jones writes not just about Italy's art, climate, and cuisine but also about the much livelier and stranger sides of the Bel Paese: the language, soccer, Catholicism, cinema, television, and terrorism. Why, he wonders, does the parliament need a "slaughter commission"? Why do bombs still explode every time politics start getting serious? Why does everyone urge him to go home as soon as possible, saying that Italy is a "brothel"? Most of all, why does one man, Silvio Berlusconi—in the words of a famous song—appear to own everything from Padre Nostro (Our Father) to Cosa Nostra (the Mafia)? The Italy that emerges from Jones's travels is a country scarred by civil wars and "illustrious corpses"; a country that is proudly visual rather than verbal, based on aesthetics rather than ethics; a country where crime is hardly ever followed by punishment; a place of incredible illusionism, where it is impossible to distinguish fantasy from reality and fact from fiction.