

Newlyweds Sarah Elwagie and Markus Alexander Thomas chose the beautiful Villa Aurelia Gianicolo for their Rome nuptials



The bride's solitaire engagement ring and wedding bands were from Stargems



The bridal bouquet of blush pink roses and peonies



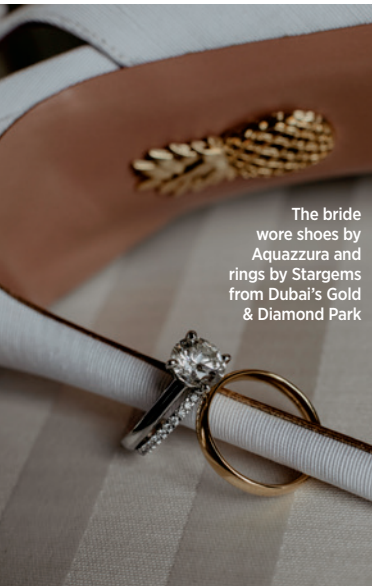
Sarah's Esra Kervan dress lies in wait of its bride

SARAH ELWAGIE

The spellbinding city of Rome served as the perfect destination for this couple to meet, marry and make memories

Photography by DAVID BASTIANONI





The bride wore shoes by Aquazzura and rings by Stargems from Dubai's Gold & Diamond Park



Sarah and Markus share their wedding vows



Sarah's dress was by Istanbul-based designer Esra Kervan



The regal-looking Villa Aurelia Gianicolo



The stunning table in the villa's lemon garden



Floral headbands lay in wait for the flower girls



Sarah had three bridesmaids - who all wore Asos - and her sister as the maid of honour



The beautiful lemon-themed illustrated menu



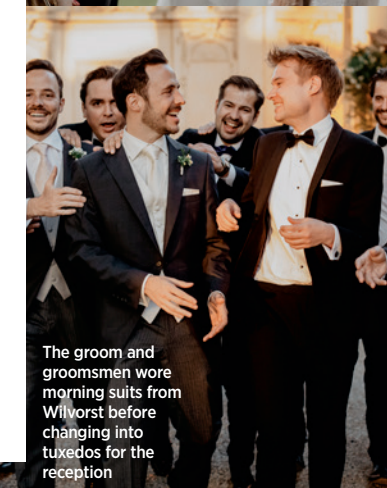
Sarah's bouquet was bursting with blush and cream peonies and roses

Sarah Elwagie, 33, was in Rome on a business trip when she reluctantly agreed to stay an extra day – an on-the-spot decision which resulted in her meeting with German invest banker, Markus Thomas Alexander, 32. They were introduced by Sarah's boss and it was a case of the numbers adding up for the two financiers. Sparks flew and they spent the following year engaged in a long distance relationship between London and Abu Dhabi. "We made sure we saw each other every other week," Sarah tells *Bazaar*. "We were together for two years before getting engaged. He took me back to Rome for the weekend and we stayed at the Portrait Roma – a spectacular boutique hotel owned by the Ferragamo family." After dinner at one of their favourite restaurants – Pierluigi – they headed to Hotel De Russie – the place Markus had stayed when they first met – and it was here on bended-knee he proposed. "Rome is where we met and got engaged, so we felt it was the perfect place to get married, too" she explains. Sarah enlisted a locally-based planner and her "PR machine" sister, Samah, to help bring everything together. They chose a beautiful 17th-century villa, Villa Aurelia Gianicolo, to wow their party of 100 guests, who were flying in from the likes of Canada, Kenya and the UAE. The wedding ceremony took place in the gardens of the villa under a century-old tree

and the make-shift aisle was centred by pillars of roses and peonies. All eyes were on the Sudanese bride when she walked down the aisle to Nora Jones' *Come Away With Me* in a resplendent custom-made Esra Kervan gown, Aquazzura shoes, large Miu Miu crystal and pearl drop earrings, and a pearl bracelet gifted to her by her mother-in-law. Dinner followed in the villa's Lemon Tree garden with suspended floral arrangements giving it a "wild and natural" feel. Guests dined on miniature eggplant parmigiana (the bride's favourite), then homemade tortelli pasta with zucchini flowers and saffron, while the naked three-layered vanilla and berry flavoured cake surrounded by berries sated the appetite of everyone with a sweet tooth. Personalised party favours – which were also the name place cards – took the form of espresso cups with everyone's name and 'espresso-urlove' printed on them. Guests also sipped cocktails with wooden stirrers customised with the bride and groom's names. "Amongst the deeply heartfelt speeches, my wonderful sister surprised us with the best rap in the middle of hers, and had the entire garden dancing," Sarah says of the memorable moment. The couple took to the dancefloor to *Sway* by Dean Martin for their first dance, before being joined by a perfectly choreographed twirl of parents and siblings. Italian jazz star Sade Mangiaracina's performance proved an "unforgettable" grand finale. ■



Love and laughter



The groom and groomsmen wore morning suits from Wilvorst before changing into tuxedos for the reception



A flower girl fixes Sarah's veil as the guests make their way through the gardens

BRIDE'S BLACK BOOK
DRESS: Esra Kervan, [Instagram.com/esrakervanofficial](https://www.instagram.com/esrakervanofficial)
SHOES: Aquazzura, +971 4 388 2367
EARRINGS: Miu Miu, +971 4 324 9276
WEDDING RINGS: Stargems, +971 4 235 1841
HAIR & MAKE-UP: Orazio Spisto, [Oraziospisto.com](https://www.oraziospisto.com)
GROOM'S SUIT: Hiirmer and Boggi, [Hiirmer.de](https://www.hiirmer.com) and [Boggi.it](https://www.boggi.it)
VENUE: Villa Aurelia, [Villaaurelia.it](https://www.villaaurelia.it)
CATERER: California Catering, [Californiacatering.it](https://www.californiacatering.it)
BAR: Mercury Events, [Mercuryevents.it](https://www.mercuryevents.it)
FLORIST: Andrea Patrizi, [Adreapatrizi.it](https://www.adreapatrizi.it)
MUSIC: Sade Mangiaracina, [facebook.com/sade.mangiaracina](https://www.facebook.com/sade.mangiaracina)
PHOTOGRAPHER: David Bastianoni, [Davidbastianoni.smugmug.com](https://www.davidbastianoni.smugmug.com)
VIDEOGRAPHER: Waterfall Visuals, [Waterfallvisuals.com](https://www.waterfallvisuals.com)



Wild flowers and lemons lined the centre of the table



Sarah and Markus listen to a reading with the wedding party