

Part two

The peace of the aftermath of Africa was short-lived. The long and acrimonious decline of our parents' marriage began. Along with this, we all lived lives which touched each other less and less. Dad continued to spend many months of the year abroad. Mum had Barbara and David to focus on. She kept unusual hours -up about six am, waking us to the moody noise of the Hoover, and often retiring to their bedroom by 8pm. Jennie spent much of her time reading or with her palomino horse, Apollo. Rick was always out and about - needing to be found at mealtimes. He ran away a few times and got into all sorts of mischief, including some petty shoplifting.

I was not one for roaming far afield like my siblings and Mum kept me on a tight rein. I was sensible and reliable so therefore a useful pair of hands with Barbara and David, babysitting and generally . There were times when I resented that the eldest seemed to have minimal benefits for the commitment required. Bedtimes were strict, television was rationed and only permitted for 'sensible programmes'. I had to listen to the pirate radio stations under the bedclothes. The swinging sixties were not allowed in our house.

To develop our appreciation of 'proper' culture we went, in 1965, on our last family holiday abroad to Italy. Mum had valued in her trip to Italy with PomPom after Nann's death. We too would have a chance to visit some historic sites and find out about the country. It was a mistake for us to stay in a villa rather than a hotel. Dad was never good in the domestic environment. It soon palled. He was irritable from the start

as his luggage was lost by the airline and it not turn up for a few days. The villa was next to the beach at a place called Palinuro. It was quite unspoiled and the nearby village had just one shop owned by the owner of the villa. His name was Vincenzo Esposito. We were invited round for dinner once to his large house. Amongst the dishes were fried octopus legs (chewy rubber) and boiled octopus (vile). The latter Jennie and I sneaked into our socks to avoid eating it. We also ate at the village restaurant where there was a simple range of delicious dishes, including locally caught fish and no tourists apart from ourselves. Apart from that, we ate at the villa using local produce.

We took a trip one day, accompanied by Vincenzo, to the Roman Ruins at Paestum. It was a dull, almost drizzly day but this did not stop two young Italians following Jennie and me around to Vincenzo's annoyance and our total bemusement. We two girls were not at all wise in the ways of the world or, for that matter, the ways of Italian men. The ruins were more important to us. Dad looks terminally bored in the photographs, as he was most of the holiday.

On the way back to Naples airport, we stopped in the town for a superb seafood lunch and we bought some souvenirs in the cameo manufacturers. I still

have the cameo necklace. I also brought home an unexpected souvenir - typhoid fever.

I was fine on the flight home, fine enough to accept an invitation to the cinema from my friend Janet Ransley the following day. We went to the matinee. The film was 'Laurence of Arabia'. I had already seen it and thought it superb. The star, Peter O'Toole, was gorgeous. So I went again. The film was every bit as good as I remembered it -in fact, better. The desert scenes were so realistic I could feel myself burning up. By the time

Mr Ransley dropped me home. I felt like I had been with Laurence every step of the way.

"I feel a bit funny", I said to Mum.

"Well, it's your own fault, sitting cooped up in a cinema. You need some fresh air, go and walk around the garden."