



A LOVE STORY

by

Sybil Ory Morris

1972

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the gate. She looked wonderful. The ease with which she
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terrace - bedecked balcony is our bonus. From it the
view is of old apartment buildings and other flower-
bedecked balconies of old Parroli. The section is charming
and Mrs. Sola (the mother of my friend Neda Trono) made
a wise choice. There are many old villas now being used
as residences -- S.K. (on the corner from us), Grace, Park,
Luna. None of the waiters, waiters, the concierge, the
dish clerk speak English. They are all Italians, but
most can speak some English. The waiters are of
this ilk and are good. The waiter was very good for
Ellen. She had to have a window double of communication.

1972

Arriverderci, Clif! As we shared our last Campari we felt a new strangeness of separating for the first time but the excitement of being in Rome with Ellen and the thrill of planning a Rome wedding spurred me on. For the most part the trip across was uneventful: movie, food, dreams and chats. I met Frida de Farro of Rome, a charming lady with whom I shared a cab from Da Vinci to town. Ellen was melted into the scene at the airport -- bedlam! -- but she focused into view the second I passed the gate. She looked wonderful. The ease with which she handled the situation -- cab, money exchange, lingo -- astounded me! Pensione Paisiello seemed like paradise. Stanzas 23 and 24 con bagno are ours. A beautiful geranium - bedecked balcony is our bonus. From it the view is of old apartment buildings and other flower-bedecked balconies of old Parioli. The section is charming and Mrs. Sola (the mother of my friend Nada Tawam) made a wise choice. There are many old villas now being used as Embassies -- U.S. (on the corner from us), Greece, Peru, Iran. None of the waiters, maids, the concierge, the desk clerk speak English. They are all Italiano, but have this warm desire to please. Our exchanges are at once ludicrous and serious. The milieu has been good for Ellen. She had to come up with some manner of communication

so she is trying Italian! Mr. and Mrs. Sola, Giuseppi, Paulo, and Nada have been more than kind and helpful. I called Clif from their apartment on a stormy, rainy afternoon. Our rooms at the pensione are pleasant and cost about 11,000 lire a day which includes two meals. Pronto! Our days took on shape! Colazione per due, per favore, and much fun and giggles trying to get the right shade of coffee. Buon giorno, buon sera, come sta, all day long. I roamed the streets of Rome -- up and down Vias Sistina, Frattina, Condotti, Gregoriana, Corso, Margutta, Tritone . . . my heart melted when I saw the pale lavender light-weight wool suit in the window at Rosita's Contreras but I resisted buying it because I thought it was insane to buy the first thing I saw. Three days later I bought it! Senora Novella and her seamstresses were charming. After several fittings the complete job was over and she complimented her girl, "Che brava!". More luck! At Luciana's I found a dream of a dress -- a full-length grey chiffon beautifully beaded. It was love at first sight! For days Ellen and I trudged Rome's ways and byways. We bought her a burgundy raincoat, a green wool knit dress, and a two-piece navy blue suit at Pucci's. Cipitelli is a tipographer on Umilta St. He has a booming business but speaks no English. Even though Nada explained to him in Italian what I wanted, the first proof of our announcement came out like this: Mrs. Lawrence Aloysius

and Mr. Clifton Tate Morris, senior Uter and Doctor, etc. . . . There were three trips to Cipitelli's and three hilarious laughs, but in the final analysis the announcements were lovely. For twenty years Mrs. Sola had known the jeweler Ugo Porro of Via Salaria in Parioli and his unblemished reputation. She and I walked to his store and found his store in a state of repair. The jewelry was in his apartment to be viewed because the negozio was being remodeled. Senora Porro seemed to read my mind. Clif's ring was easy. The engraving reads simply, "Sybil to Clifton, 9-23-72." My ring is unique. It looks like a tiny gold Renaissance crown. I had four more gold rings made with names and dates for each of my four girls.

The store hours, office hours, post office hours are maddening: open from 9 - 1, closed from 1 - 4, and reopened from 4 - 8. An entire day is devoted to eating and getting things done in Italian time. Father Mahowald has been most helpful in the wedding plans. He will celebrate the Mass at the Vatican and perform the marriage ceremony. Father O'Donnell, pastor of Santa Susannah Church for Americans in Rome, has been kind, too. One evening Father Mahowald, Mr. and Mrs. Yolles (he is the principal at the Rome Overseas School), Monsignor Stanley Ott from Baton Rouge, Ellen and I had dinner at L'Eau Vive. It was opened three years ago by an order of missionary sisters

(The Missionary Workers of Mary Immaculate of L'eau Vive) who do all of the cooking, serving, cleaning, etc., and have made "L'Eau Vive" into a very chic Roman restaurant. The cuisine is French. The Sisters speak French and wear costumes native to their individual countries. Nada, Ellen and I went to try it out one day for lunch and we decided on the spot that this was where our dinner party the night before the wedding would be. It is quite elegant. Ellen and I dined at the Casina Valadier one evening at the suggestion of Roman friends and we decided that the wedding luncheon would be at this fascinating Roman landmark. Happy anticipation!

Don Ferro, Jeweler
Via Salvia 4128
Phone 873-312

Ferdinando Pastorello Pastorelli
Via Pastorello 47
Phone 880-300

Astor-Variety Palace Hotel
Via Veneto 8, 74
Phone 470-431

Rosetta Contreras, Haute Couture
Via Condotti 95
Phone 879-13-37

Luciani
Via dei Picelli 2, 30
Phone 877-28-74

Cappitelli, Tipographer
Via della
Phone 87-47-18

Casina Valadier (Rincio)
Viale Umberto
Phone 879-3083

L'Eau Vive
Via...
Phone 87-61-85

Relative Information

Nada Tawam
c/o Sola Family
Via D. Cimarosa #3
Rome 00198
Phone 845-6832

Reverend Monsignor Richard J. Mahowald
North American College
Graduate Department
Casa S. Maria dell'Umilta
Via dell'Umilta #30
Rome
Phone 67-90-658

Reverend Robert O'Donnell
Pastor, Church of Santa Susannah
Via Venti Settembre 14
Phone 471510 (office); 462748 (home)

Mr. and Mrs. Elia J. Clyne
Via Cavalier D'Arpino #5, Apt. 2

Ugo Porro, Jeweler
Via Salaria #128
Phone 865-318

Pensione Paisiello Pazioli
Via Paisiello 47
Phone 860-800

Ambasciatori Palace Hotel
Via Veneto N. 70
Phone 480-451

Rosita Contreras, Haute Couture
Via Condotti 95
Phone 679-13-37

Luciani
Via due Micelli N. 30
Phone 679-28-74

Cippitelli, Tipographer
84 Umilta
Phone 67-47-18

Casina Valadier (Pincio)
Villa Umberto
Phone 679-2083

L'Eau Vive
Via Monterone #85
Phone 85-651-095

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September 21

Clif and Candace arrived in Rome. Ellen and I joined them at the Ambasciatori Palace Hotel. Went to the U.S. Embassy, the Italian clerk-of-court's office, to get stamps at a tabacchi -- much red tape!

September 22

Mad dash to the Vatican with Father O'Donnell to have papers signed. Crowds were cordoned off because of a meeting between the Pope and the Italian president for the first time (about divorce in Italy). In the evening a beautiful dinner party at L'Eau Vive. Clif gave me exquisite pearls with a sapphire and diamond clasp. Nada and Father Mahowald were guests.

September 23

Confessions in English at St. Peter's and then our big event! We were married in the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at the foot of the tomb of St. Peter. Candace and Ellen were witnesses and the Sola and Clyne families were our guests. Spectators peered through the locked iron grill door to watch the wedding in progress. As we walked out several of them congratulated us, "Auguri, dottore!" Candace and Ellen went in cars with the other guests to the Casina Valadier. Clif and I rode up in an open carriage.

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There is a magnificent view of St. Peter's from the balcony of the Casina Valadier. Our lunch was served in a private dining room at a huge round table. Ellen and I had carefully planned the menu with the maitre'd! Later Clif and I went to the Parco dei Principe Hotel in Parioli. Nada chose it because she thought it was romantic!

September 24

Mass at St. Theresa's. Great rush to the airport with a stop at Nada's apartment to leave Clif's hat and other baggage! Driver couldn't find Via Cimarosa a block away and Nada was waiting anxiously for us. We arrived in Tunis and went to the Hotel Majestic. Tunis, exotic and colorful, is an exciting place and different as night and day from the rest of the world. Dinars, jasmines, white sedi-saris, Ahmet and a driver. To the Cafe de le Palais for music, local color and food, and even a belly-dancer. Clif and I kissed in the taxi and the driver nearly had a fit. No such nonsense is allowed in Tunis!

September 25

Our driver took us to his home to eat pomegranates before we left for ancient Carthage and Sidi-Bou Said on the Mediterranean. The starkness of the white and blue town against the blueness of the sea was quite dramatic! Ahmet

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took us to visit the St. Louis Cathedral. A visit to the souks where I bought a shepherd's wool coat with hood, and a length of white sedi-sari cloth to use as a tablecloth. Dinner at the Hotel Africa elegant dining room and dancing. In my happiness, I left my shawl!

September 26

We joined a Tour Afrique group to visit the ruins of Dougga. Stopped along the way for lunch at a small dirty-looking restaurant where a health inspection was taking place but we didn't know it at that time. On the way home Clif and I got off the bus at the famous Bardo Museum in Tunis to see the splendid mosaics. Yesterday we also visited the seaside resort of Hammamet which is particularly popular with the Germans. Lunch in a beautiful hotel.

September 27

Left Tunis at 9:00 for Athens on #L2-162, a Balkan flight, and stopped over in Libya at Benghazi. No picture-taking was allowed at this airport where military planes were heavily camouflaged. We will remember forever Tunis and our happy memories of the Hotel Majestic where we changed rooms three times because the air-conditioning wouldn't work and only after much consultation did we discover that it wasn't plugged in! Clif tried to explain to the desk clerk when

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we first arrived why we had separate passports with different names, that we were married but hadn't changed my name yet. The clerk tried to understand but finally threw up his hands and said, "It's too difficult!" Our walks on the broad boulevard called Habib Bourguiba were romantic. The town moved slowly and had a permeating smell of jasmine. It was sold everywhere. The sedi-saris were all white and as ubiquitous as the red felt hats of the men. But come dusk and there was not a woman on the streets, only men. I was an oddity.

At the airport in Athens the craziest thing happened. We were not allowed to enter the airport past the arrival area because we showed no cholera shot protection according to our health certificates. It seems that there had been an epidemic of cholera in Tunisia the few days we were there and we, of course, had been thoroughly exposed. Clif called the U.S. Embassy but they could not help us. We were offered the choice of entering a hospital for five days to be isolated or leaving on the next plane wherever it was going. At 7:00 P.M. we left Athens for Milan. Upon arrival there we decided to get in separate lines so we could evade the issue of where we had come from. Both of us were asked to step aside. A group of three were waiting there in Milan for us. We presented a big problem to the authorities who frankly didn't know what to do with us. While Clif was gathering our luggage one of them asked in broken English if we planned to go to

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Florence. I said, "Yes." He quickly answered, "Fine! You go now!" His job was over and he literally washed his hands of us. We took the 11:30 P.M. train for Firenze and arrived exhausted at 3:30 A.M. We could find no place at any big hotel so the taxi driver kindly found us a space at the Hotel Patria, a pensione.

September 28

We went to the American Express near the Ponte Vecchio to make more travel plans. Like Napoleon we decided to hide out at Elba and then go to Montecatini. Besides, by this time we felt as if we might have cholera! But first we visited the beauties of Florence.

September 29

Took a train for Campiglia and then another one for Piombino right up to the waterfront to catch the ferry to the Isle of Elba in the Tyrrhenian Sea. It took several hours and we drank Cinar along the way to cure our "cholera." Arrived at Porteferraio and were met by a hotel representative. He drove us miles and miles around the island to a point called Proccio to the Hotel del Golfo. After lunch there and a look around we went back to Porteferraio to visit Napoleon's home of exile. Then to the villa at San Martino which is now a museum. Dinner that evening at a small restaurant named "Giacone's". But, first, Camparis on the waterfront.

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September 30

Took the ferry back to Piombino and Campiglia and on to Pisa. We were sitting nibbling a sandwich when it occurred to me to get off the train for a look at the tower and get another later train for Rome. Trouble with Clif who wouldn't move! I practically had to drag him off the train but then we had the time of our lives. In a slow horse-drawn carriage we rode all through Pisa, had a gelati, visited the impressive tower and Cathedral, took pictures, and finally, almost missed our train. We arrived back in Florence and had dinner at Campodoglio's. That night we saw a satire in the magnificent setting of the Pitti Palace, a frustrating experience because the acting was so fine and we couldn't understand a word.

October 1

After Mass we visited the Church of Santa Maria Novella and the San Marco Museum. We left Florence for the lovely spa at Montecatini by train and arrived in time for lunch at our hotel, the Grand Ambasciatore. Mass at St. Anthony's and a look around town. We visited an art exhibit of lovely little miniatures and we met the artist, Giancarlo Dughetti, a fuori. Had Camparis and dinner and a trip to a disco in the main drag of the town where they played "Raindrops Keep Falling on Our Head" especially for us every evening.

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October 2

Had our first waters at the Grand Terme where elegant, well-dressed Italians strolled around the area commiserating with one another about their fegatos. "Et com'e il suo fegato oggi?" they inquired of each other as though they had not abused the old livers the night before. On the advice of an Italian gentleman we first tried the waters from the fountain which were the weakest. One builds up in strength to the most powerful of them all, the Toretto. An orchestra was playing beautiful concert music and the gentle crowd milled around greeting one another in soft, subdued tones. It was a setting from another century, a strange sensation seeing these people under this circumstance.

October 3

After drinking the waters again this morning (Toretto no less) we had breakfast at our hotel. We walked around the area, then went with a driver along the super highway (Rome, Milan, Bologna) to Siena. Visited the Cathedral and the Museum and took pictures on the piazza with the pigeons. Had lunch at Al Mangia's on Piazza de Campo. Drove then to San Gimignano which is perched high on a hill. Once it had 72 towers but now there are 13. It is a strikingly well-preserved medieval town. Saw an impressive fresco of the Martyrdom of St. Sebastian in the Church. Around the corner to the church courtyard on an obscure wall is

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Ghirlandaio's Annunciation fresco. Clif bought the card for me. Also, saw an exhibit of a 20th century Italian artist, Marlotti. Drove through the Tuscan countryside and the Appenine Mts. Many small enchanting towns, and green, rich valleys with a generous sprinkling of black grapes and white grapes and heavily laden olive trees-- Chianti country. At dusk we approached Leonardo Da Vinci's birthplace. Although it was nearly dark the guard answered our plea to allow us a visit. It is now a museum with his original sketches, examples of his genius at inventions -- unbelievable to understand how the mind of a genius could have been nurtured in such a small town!

October 4

Back to Rome to say "Ciao" to Ellen, the Clyne and Sola families and Father Mahowald and to throw coins into the Trevi Fountain. On to Paris to continue a love story!

