WITH WHAT I HAVE LEFT

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NEW HOLLAND

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First published in 2024 by New Holland Publishers
Sydney

Level 1, 178 Fox Valley Road, Wahroonga, NSW 2076, Australia

newhollandpublishers.com

A record of this book is held at the National Library of Australia.

ISBN 9781760796686

Managing Director: Fiona Schultz
Project Editor: Xavier Waterkeyn
Cover photograph: Andy Mayne Photography
Designer: Andrew Davies
Production Director: Arlene Gippert
Printed in China

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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1. The Girl I Used to Be

My immediate hatred for her surprised me.

She walked up and stood near me, both of us waiting for the elevator. I was having a bad day. She was me, and she was not me. She was what I used to be. Tears formed, and I kept them back. I took in everything; her black heels, her legs that screamed sport, gym, exercise. Her tailored suit, crisp white shirt. The hair, perfectly straight. Light make-up. The leather bag, laptop size. She took out her mobile, spoke to someone about meeting targets and hung up. The elevator arrived. She motioned for me to enter first; of course, she would. She gave me a wan smile. I almost cried in front of her.

I walked into the elevator and didn't look at the mirrored walls. I didn't want to see me as I was; walking stick, flat, sensible shoes, hair tied back in a ponytail, comfortable, practical no-buttons-or-hook clothes, gait off centre – perhaps she thought I was drunk – bags under the eyes, dowdy, invisible to men. If I were on Tinder, you'd swipe left. She didn't see the cuts and scars I was so proud of, hidden under long sleeves. She didn't know the beautiful pain I craved. I was grateful she didn't speak to me. That morning I was slurring my words. She alighted, and I heard her heels making click-click noises as she walked out. I stood, paralysed with grief, mourning my old life, the life she had now. High flying corporate.

I wanted to go backwards, to morph into her. I didn't want to be me, dying. I didn't ask for this disease, this reduction of a life that had taken everything I had. The stage of acceptance that people talk about seemed a lifetime away if I lived that long. I stepped out of the elevator onto the floor that housed the medical specialists. Why me? I kept asking. Why me? The day before, I'd just come out of psychiatric care after yet another suicide attempt. My mother had organised for me to be in care for a while. I didn't want to go. Pumped with drugs, groggy and tired, I signed some papers. I remember my mother saying, "Just sign it, sweetie," I remember her saying, "You're a whore. You'll never

amount to anything."

As I walked down the corridor, I saw her again, the girl that used to be me. She walked with purpose. I looked at her again before entering the door of the specialist. She was my old life, and I had to let it go. I didn't know how to do it, but I knew I had to do something, anything with the time I had left.

2. **The Spider**

I got through the ordeal by keeping my eyes on a spider. While the man grunted away, I watched the spider spinning its web, its perfectly patterned home taking shape, bit by bit. Methodical, purposeful, the spider knew exactly what it was doing. And here I was having sex for money in a toilet block, the floor littered with wet toilet paper, cigarette butts and used condoms. The stench of urine hit my nostrils. I read the graffiti on the cubicle walls. *For a good time, ring Sonia. Kim is a slut.* The windows above the cubicle were streaked with grime. I was streaked with grime on the inside, silently screaming. Hurry up. Hurry up. Please, just finish.

He finished. We left the toilet block and drove straight to the bank. He gave me five thousand dollars. On the way back to the psychiatric hospital, neither of us spoke. I couldn't wait to have a shower. I told him I couldn't stay and talk. He told me he had to go home to his wife and kids.

He was supposed to have been a friend. It was 2008, and I had been admitted to Mosman Private's psychiatric ward. I was there from February to April. While I was recovering, I was stressed about finances as I was running out of money. The hospital fees were not cheap. I didn't know how I was going to survive. I had to find somewhere to live and pay rent. I needed money for food, bills, medicine, doctors and specialists and health fund payments. My credit card was almost maxed out. My disability pension had not yet come through. The only option was a homeless shelter, refuge, hospital or live in my car. This situation was a constant source of stress, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. It plagued me day and night. The loop tape went round and round in my head.

Get discharged.

Find job.

Have money.

Find place to live.

The staff were told that no calls from my family were to be put through to me

as I would be attacked verbally by my family. One afternoon, however, a nurse put through a call from my father.

"When are you going to get your act together?" he asked. "You need to take responsibility for your situation."

The nurse was reprimanded for letting that call go through. I couldn't stop thinking about what my father had said. He didn't understand how a person couldn't just snap out of major depression and get on with it. How was I supposed to get my act together? What was my act anyway? What wasn't I taking responsibility for? I knew I was responsible for everything that went wrong. I had always been told that and I believed it, so wasn't that taking responsibility?

On the day I accepted money for sex, I had been allowed out on day release. The 'old friend' had come to visit me one morning. He was a very wealthy man. This man had wanted to have a relationship with me, and I had always said no. I wasn't attracted to him romantically or sexually, but that wasn't the only reason. He was married and had three children. I was very anxious on the morning he visited. I was mulling over my financial situation and ended up confiding in him about how broke I was.

"I'll give you five thousand dollars," he said. "It's not a loan. You don't have to pay me back, but there is one thing I ask in return."

He turned to face me. By then we were walking through a park.

"I want us to have sex. Just once."

I stood there, speechless. The idea was repugnant to me, but as I was standing there, I heard my father's voice in my head. *Take responsibility. Take responsibility.* I decided that perhaps this was a way of taking responsibility for getting out of debt. Yes, I decided as my future flashed before my eyes. No more debt. Credit card paid off without accruing more interest. Enough for a bond to get a place. No more sleeping in my car. Rent paid while I looked for work. Enough money to eat properly. This was called taking responsibility.

"All right," I said.

He could hear the reluctance in my voice.

"Where?"

"There," he said, motioning toward the toilet block.

"No way," I said. "Absolutely not."

"You'll change your mind if we don't do it soon."

He was right about that.

Back at the hospital, under the shower, I scrubbed furiously, hurting myself.

Disgusting.

You're disgusting, I told myself. To have stooped so low as to have sex with a guy for money in a public toilet made me feel sick. I judged myself harshly; it took the shine out of being debt free. I felt depressed and filthy. I didn't feel like I'd taken responsibility. I scrubbed till my skin was red and sore. I felt like I wanted to end it all.

I promised myself that I would never do that ever again. That incident made me realise that I couldn't judge sex workers for doing what they did. Desperation makes people do things that they normally wouldn't do. There was a time I considered being an escort but with no sex; the type that businessmen want when they need a partner at a function, but the idea faded as my body slowly broke down. Much later, when I was able to process events in my life with some help, I was filled with anger at that man. He took advantage of a mentally ill patient in a psychiatric hospital. Yes, I was a consenting adult, but I was a consenting adult who was not in a fit mental state to make decisions about anything. He was a selfish opportunist with no morals. I was so afraid of people finding out, fearful of people judging me and seeing me as a certain type of person, that I told nobody. I kept the dirty sex-in-the-toilet-block-for money secret to myself for a long time. Much later, I understood that the incident in the toilet block didn't define who I was. I was at one of the lowest points in my life and that man, who should have known better, had preyed on me.

After I was discharged from Mosman, I went straight to the tattooist and got some more ink on my body. I needed to feel pain. It didn't help. I wanted the needle to go so deep that it would pierce through to my heart. The pain level wasn't strong enough to wash away the abhorrence I felt about what I had done. I lay in bed that night and thought about my life, about its beginnings, its journey, and about how it had come to this. I tried to find reasons, a pattern, answers to questions I still had, anything that would let me understand why my life had turned out as it had. None of it made sense.

3. **My Family**

I grew up in a house, not a home.

At the time of my birth in 1975, my family lived in a beautiful old federation house, with traditional mouldings, a fireplace, all the way down to the original green bathtub. The kitchen cupboards were wooden. Mum got sick of asking Dad to update the kitchen, so she laminated all the insides of the cupboards. When she opened them, at least she saw something new. She felt at least something had been changed.

The house was always spotless; nothing was ever out of place. When my parents' first grandchild came along people said, "Soon you will have to move everything up high."

Mum said no, "She will learn as my children did, look, but no touch." I believe I was the only one who broke something. I started walking at nine months. Actually, I just got up and ran. No crawling, just got up and started running. I didn't know how to stop running, and I broke a black clock cat positioned in the hallway. I learnt there was, of course, no running allowed. No running, no touching and that was the hard part – there was stuff everywhere. Mum had decorated every corner of the house; it was nicely done but entirely over the top in a sort of Maltese-Aussie kitsch sort of way. Every door had a gold tassel hanging from it. All the windows had bars on them, not to keep us in but to keep intruders out. A total fire hazard.

One Christmas, my mother hung strands of fairy lights off every tree in the garden. Our house looked like a magical wonderland, ablaze with twinkling stars. We lived not too far from the airport. A friend once said, "My God, it's a wonder the planes don't get mixed up when they're landing." After that Christmas, my father went to take the lights down. My mother urged him to leave them up for just a little bit longer. A little bit longer tuned into a lot longer so that my father didn't ever get to take them down. They remained a permanent fixture so much so that nobody ever had to give too many directions on how to find our house.

I remember wishing that the magical feeling that permeated the garden would seep into the house and do some good there, but I was to be disappointed.

We were nominal Catholics, attending at Easter and Christmas. I attended a Catholic school for my primary and secondary schooling. I was a believer but only because we were told that we had to; there was no other choice. Doin' the Catholic thing. The nuns were strict, and we had to do Religious Studies as part of the curriculum.

Our house was split-level. The family was split level. The kitchen, bathroom, my parent's room, my brother's room, the TV room, dining room, sitting room, ironing room and what became my bedroom were on the main level. The living room accommodated the stairs up to the attic, which became the computer room and my sister's bedroom. The stairs leading down went to the study and Dad's workroom, which then lead out to the downstairs shower and bathroom and the laundry room. Off the kitchen were the back stairs, which lead to the back yard and rumpus room.

Many times, these stairs made an excellent escape route. If I was in trouble, about to be smacked and was making a run for it, the house with all its levels and stairs provided great opportunities. And I was in trouble from an early age.

"You're useless," my mother told me.

"You'll never amount to much," she said.

My father never said I was useless, but his patriarchal Maltese upbringing cemented the old beliefs that girls weren't quite as valuable as boys.

If I was in trouble, I could run down the stairs from the living room through Dad's workroom, through the bathroom and into the yard, allowing for an easy getaway – just as long as the bathroom door wasn't locked and the person pursuing you hadn't outsmarted you by taking the stairs off the kitchen to the back yard and waiting on the other side of the bathroom door. When Dad renovated the house, I had a room of my own.

I loved being alone. I felt at peace. Four walls, the door closed, silence. Mine. All mine. Nobody else existed. I could do what I wanted, and I could have the room exactly as I wanted. I loved the smell of clean and tidy. Nothing was ever going to be out of place. I could coordinate everything without being laughed at. No one could barge in whenever they wanted; no lights were going on and off at all hours, no one running past making noise. I didn't have to change in the

bathroom. I was good at gymnastics, so I stretched a lot. I also sang as loud as I wanted to. I could read as much as I wanted without interruption or funny looks. No one in my family read. I didn't have to listen to others' conversations and wait for my turn to speak. I didn't have to listen to what was being analysed or discussed. I didn't have to listen to comments about how useless I was. It was my haven away from my mother's constant criticism, her comments about everything I said or did. It was here that I began to have conversations with the other me.

"You're not useless, you know, Hope," I said.

"Yes, I know. I know."

"Why does she say I'm useless?"

"I don't know. I don't know what I've done wrong. Nothing I do ever pleases her."

"Don't worry. Just keep going."

"But it's hard because isn't Mum always right?"

My room was the one place where quiet existed. I was myself. I read, I wrote in my journal, I let my imagination run wild. I would only come out when called. Dad would always say, 'Leave your door open' or 'What are your hiding in there?' Even later, as a teenager, I wasn't loud. I didn't date or go to clubs. I didn't take drugs or sleep with boys. I was just plain me, quiet, conservative, alone. From an early age, I was sick, and illness plagued me through childhood and into my teenage years. I never thought about family until much later in my life and just accepted that we were just like most other families. The people who I thought were my grandparents were the only grandparents I'd known. They were a strong and positive presence in my life.

My maternal grandmother was 'Nanny' and my maternal grandfather was 'Grandad.' Nanny was of the blue rinse era. Going to the city was called going to 'town', and of course you wore your best dress, gloves, hat, pantyhose, polished closed in shoes and your face was always made up perfectly. Mills and Boons books were her favourites. Nan was always home. Many women didn't work back then. I can still see her sitting at the kitchen bench reading, always reading, same seat, same position.

Grandad was the complete opposite. Back in the day, both Nan and Grandad were from Orange in Sydney New South Wales. Grandad would sell fruit and vegetables door to door. He was an entrepreneur from the start. When they

moved to Sydney, I believe they lived in Glebe. They bought boarding houses and also managed them for someone else. This involved long hours, emotional and physical labour. Grandad had very thick skin. Eventually, they owned a lot of properties in Glebe, but of course, that didn't stop Grandad. Between Grandad going to war and Nanny enduring many miscarriages, they started a family-owned and run business which is still running today.

Grandad was very wealthy, but he always wore singlets with holes in them and pants with braces. Brylcreem was always a morning ritual, and so was cooking bubble 'n' squeak.

I spent a lot of time with Grandad doing deliveries, driving all over the place. Grandad believed it was saving the company money. Grandad's company employed the kids in my family. We put nuts and bolts together that went to make skateboards. We would be paid $5.00 per box. We then had to place them in separate bags. The boxes contained at least two thousand pieces each. It was tedious work.

I never met my biological grandparents; the only picture that I have in my head about my biological grandmother is her height. She stood at five foot nine.

I found out at nineteen that my 'grandparents' were Mum's aunt and uncle. They had one child, a son. Mum's mother died when she was twelve, and she was raised by a relative and her father. Even so, Mum basically raised herself and her younger brother. Mum's father was an alcoholic. He earned a good salary, but he would always drink it away. My biological grandmother died from cancer, but I'm sure that years of physical and psychological abuse from her husband played a huge role. Her husband was six foot tall and strong. He would bash my mother mostly because she was a girl and he only wanted boys.

"You're no good coz you're only a girl," he would tell her. "You're not wanted."

Often my mother's and her brother's nightly meal was a packet of chips from a vending machine and a soft drink at the Campsie pub. They would sit out in the gutter, waiting for my grandmother to come out of the side door of the pub and quickly throw them their food before going back inside again. My grandmother had no choice in this situation. She either went to the pub with her husband and did precisely what he told her to do or else suffer a brutal beating. These were not the days where a woman with no means of support, and two children could easily leave her husband. No welfare system and nobody to

turn to for help added to the shame of the situation and meant that she had no other option.

Mum developed ways of surviving. She became a tomboy and often got into fights defending her young brother. She was tall, skinny, and tough. She could run and run fast. After many years of physical and mental abuse my mother and her brother ran from the house never to return. My grandfather was very drunk, and a neighbour from across the street advised my mother and her brother not to go into the house and instead run to a relative's house. They ran to the house of an aunt and uncle, and this is where they stayed permanently. She was fourteen, and her brother was ten.

I always thought that with her background Mum might have gone the other way, and I was always so proud of how she chose to be better and not let her past dictate her future. I now understand because of her aunt and uncle, whom she came to call Mum and Dad, she was given a fantastic opportunity. She was fourteen when she went to live with my grandparents. She worked hard in the boarding houses. She often spoke of the manual labour and the long hours. Grandad believed in hard work and that I am sure this is where she got her work ethic as well as respecting herself, understanding and respecting others. I realised how much courage and willingness my Mum showed at the age of fourteen. When she met my Dad, she was a trainee hairdresser. She never finished her course. I had no idea that her dysfunctional upbringing was to have an impact on me.

At age nineteen, I processed all this information with the maturity that any nineteen-year-old had and moved on. As a teenager, my grandparents living across the road from us wasn't always an ideal situation. My parents often suggested that I go and visit my grandparents and I would groan and complain, asking my parents why I had to visit them over the road when they were always at our house anyway. My nanny would sit in the same chair in our kitchen, waiting for us to walk in and kiss her. She had a habit of leaning forward and tucking our hair behind our ears and saying, 'Sweetheart, let me see your face. You have such a beautiful face. Don't hide it.' As I matured, these memories are the things I cherish. Even now, I find myself tucking my hair behind my ears and every time I do, I think of my nanny. I wouldn't have wanted different grandparents for anything in the world.

I never met my paternal grandmother, Dana, as she died before I was born.

Dad was one of six, born in Malta. When I was a small child, I had the idea that Dad was quite exotic as he wasn't born in Australia. I had heard stories about the stalk bringing babies, and I imagined something better for my father. In my imagination, he was born in a cabbage. There was a field of cabbages, but my father's cabbage was the best and most prominent of them all. I heard many years later that Dad's mother disapproved of my mother.

"Have some fun with her, but don't marry her," she had said.

Nanna Dana frowned on the very short skirts that my mother used to wear.

On one occasion, she told my mother off.

"Keep your legs closed. You're not showing us anything new," she said.

Dad's father, Nanu, was an imposing man. Short, dark, and surly, we lived in fear of him. A hard man, his idea of fixing his dental problems was to tie a piece of string to his tooth and tie the other end to a door handle and pull. My brother hated visiting him as Nanu would pinch his cheeks so hard that my brother would be in pain for a few days. Every two weeks, on the journey in our family van, my brother would be dreading the visit. When we pulled up outside Nanu's house, my father would turn off the ignition and turn around in his seat. He'd sigh. That sigh filled us with foreboding. We knew what was coming.

"You will be seen but not heard."

Anything to do with Nanu was done with military precision. Like the Von Trapps, we lined up in order of age, the oldest being the first to kiss him and say hello. His idea of a cuddle, if the children tried to do that, was to pat them on the back. We learned to read Dad's face for approval for the simplest things like going to the toilet and asking for a glass of water. We had to read Dad's face to gauge whether we were doing the right thing in Nanu's house. If Nanu offered us anything like chocolate, we had to take it for fear of offending him. We would look at Dad for approval. Nanu never offered us a drink, ever. His second wife, Lilly, who we called Nanna Lilly, would offer us a drink, and we would look at Dad for permission, and we knew just by looking at his eyes and the slight nod of his head that the answer had to be "no".

Dad was the product of the migrant experience; strict, austere, and mindful of never wasting money. He had a habit of never being fully engaged with watching television. He would always have his head slightly bent away, never looking straight ahead at the screen, with one eye averted as to whatever else was going on in the

house. The children in Nanu's house sat in age order while watching television. Dad used to tell us that being the fourth born, he sat further to the back and got used to watching television craning his head to see through the spaces of bodies sitting in front of him. He arrived in Australia with his immediate family when he was one year old. In the early days, he was the spitting image of Jerry Lewis. But over the years he is more of a chocolate box, a mix of Robert DeNiro, a splash of Denzel Washington all wrapped up with the height of Robin Williams. His family disproved of him marrying an Australian woman. They wanted him to marry a Maltese. I once asked him, "Why am I so short compared to my brother who is six foot and my sisters who are of average height?"

He just looked at me and said, "I was very tired that night, sorry."

He was the archetypal Maltese immigrant. When he went shopping or buying anything through a private sale, he bargained his way to the cheapest price by asking, 'How much for cash?' It didn't matter if it was a lot of money involved and he didn't have it on him at the time. It didn't matter whether it was a small item or a car.

"I'll be back later," he'd say. "With cash."

When my siblings and I were old enough to understand the value of water views, we told Dad we'd love to have one.

"There's a fishpond in our front yard," he said. "There's water in it. That's a water view."

As far as the yard went, Dad would have concreted over everything if he'd had his way.

We didn't see much of Dad when we were growing up. He worked all the time and was not very involved in our day to day lives. We only saw him for about an hour a day. He would eat dinner in front of the TV then a shower and was off the bed. He would be gone in the morning before sunrise. He had several jobs. Sometimes he would not come home as a Sunday rolled into a Monday, which he would call a Smonday. As soon as Dad got home, we would all run to our desks and make it look like we had been there since we got home from school. My mother would shout out to us, "Quick, your father's home. Hurry up and look like you're studying." Her tone of voice and facial expression told us that my father was a man to be feared.

We were always waiting for the smack, for not sitting right, not trying hard

enough. Anything and everything equalled a smack. If my mother wanted us to be afraid of him, she succeeded. My father was typical of many migrants who expected great things from their children as they had come to a new country to give their kids the opportunities that they missed. When I did well on an exam or essay, I couldn't wait to show my father. I wanted to make him proud. If I got ninety-eight per cent he would say "What did you do wrong?" or "Where's the other two per cent?"

According to my mother, the other two per cent went missing because I was a failure.

"You'll never amount to anything," she said. "It's a wonder you even got that mark."

I quickly stopped sharing or being proud of my achievements. At times my father could be fun, especially when we were little. He would play-bite, telling me that arm or foot or toe belonged to him and he wanted it back. I would scream with laughter. Those times were far and few. I can look back and thank him for helping me become the person I am today. I guess with my very bumpy journey, having a thick and determined skin has served me well. He was tough. It made me tough, as well.

As I got older, I realised that his strict way of child-rearing was because he just wanted his children to be brought up the right way. He knew only the way that Nanu and Nanna, his mother, his had raised him. He taught me many excellent qualities, morals and values that I will use for the rest of my life. He taught me right from wrong. My parents had very different attitudes to money. Because of Dad's upbringing, he was tight with money, and he drilled it into our heads to save for the things we wanted. Like many migrants who had come from nothing, he hated waste. For every ten dollars that we saved as kids, Dad would match it with another ten. He had seen his relatives buy cars for their children and believed that those children learned nothing about saving. My mother was the opposite. Put it on credit and think about it later, she told us.

I don't know exactly when my Mum went from being Mum to just my mother. Once she was Mum. We spent nine long months together, it being a hard pregnancy. I wanted to come three months early and, in those days, they put women on alcoholic drips to stop labour. In the delivery room, I was coming out with one hand over my head; I was inquisitive even then. I wanted to touch

and feel before I was sure I wanted to enter. Because of the difficult delivery, which could have resulted in both mother and child dying, I spent the first three months of my life in hospital. Apparently, I was the perfect child, falling into routine straight away. Mum had four kids under five years of age, so I suppose she was glad that the new baby didn't present too much of a challenge.

"It almost killed me, her delivery. I could've died."

I was to hear this story many times in my life. It meant nothing to me when I was a child, but later it took on different shades of meaning. Guilt began to creep into my psyche. I almost killed her; it was up to me to please her and make her happy.

I had grommets put in my ears when I was two years old, and not long after, my tonsils and adenoids were removed. I learnt I had glue ear and the gummites over time would fall out. No one noticed I was deaf until Mum started wondering why I wouldn't respond when she was talking directly to me, and then when I had my back to her, I wouldn't respond at all. To me, she wasn't even there. I got a lot of smacks for not listening. I didn't understand why I was suddenly hit. It was finally worked out a specialist. One day at school, when I was in second grade, a small clear round apparatus with wires inside fell out of my right ear. I was terrified and began to panic. My Mum was called to try and calm me down. I wondered whether I was human or perhaps an alien. My head was coming out through my ears. I was made of wires and bits. No one really explained what was happening and why.

I often heard my mother on the phone to her friends, complaining about me.

"She's always sick. And now she has to have her tonsils out. I'm exhausted with this child. What have I done to deserve this?"

My siblings picked up on my mother's resentment. Her web of lies about me was spun early, and they believed her. Because I was so often sick, I developed an idea from a young age that I was a burden on my mother and as an extension of this idea I also believed that I deserved pain because I was such a problem child. Even though pain hurt physically, there was something about being in pain that brought some relief. I believed I needed to suffer to make up for all the disruption I was causing to my family. It was the counterbalance to all the problems that I caused for my parents. It was the start of self-harm. Every time I made her upset, I had to hurt myself. I hurt myself a lot.

4. Fruit Loop

Despite having four small children, Mum kept our house spotless. Mum had one room in the house, the ironing room, that was allowed to be messy, and it was. All those loads of washing, ironing. I am sure she threw everything in there and just closed the door. One day I followed her in when I was two years old, and as my vocabulary was limited, all I said was, "Clean up, clean up." Mum said she was dumbfounded as she watched me pick up things and put them on the floor at her feet. It was simply learned behaviour. I watched her; I copied her. "Clean up, clean up" were two of my first words.

I showed an ability for athletics and gymnastics from an early age and started doing gymnastics at the age of four. My sisters were indoor types, on the phone, watching TV or trying on different outfits, whereas I loved being outdoors. I spent my time in shorts and a tee-shirt, getting dirty, climbing trees, riding my skateboard or BMX bike. I never liked make-up and still don't. My brother and I became inseparable. When I wasn't outside, I was in my room, never wanting to leave my surroundings. That always got me in a lot of trouble. My parents would shout as I was always behind closed doors. I had friends at school, but I knew never to invite them home. Nobody ever told me I couldn't ask my classmates home, but instinct told me it wouldn't be allowed. Therefore, I didn't get a chance to see how other families behaved and what roles in the family looked like.

Mum enrolled all four kids at the local Youth Club, where we undertook tap, ballet, and gymnastics. My sisters preferred tap and ballet with their tutus and hair spray and spangled tops. Too prissy for me, I preferred the rumble and tumble of gymnastics. I had a coach who saw something in me. I had a go at everything and would not stop until I succeeded. The desire to succeed at all costs, inherited from my father, was ingrained in me.

"See, you can be good at something!" my inner voice said.

"But keep it to yourself. Don't get too proud."