

## WHO AM I?

What a question for an ice-breaker! The most complex question one can ask another human, and oneself. If I knew the whole answer why would I join a club that/s essentially about personal development? But let me tell you a story, in pictures, that might help. I was born in Nairobi, Kenya, 52 years ago of Italian parents,



and from earliest age they took me on safari. Here is a tent my father built that opened up on top of the car. Perhaps it was this early exposure to a wild and rugged land that nurtured my love of wildlife, and my conviction that preserving biodiversity should be the top priority of humans today.



Here I am with my grandfather. I didn't know it was him of course; every Christmas after lunch he ran out of cigarettes, and went out to buy them, just before Father Christmas arrived...!



When I was 3 my sister, Paola, was born, and 5 years later, my brother Stefano.



What an idyllic childhood we had!



My education started at Loreto Convent, and at the age of 12, I was confirmed. When asked what I liked most about the day I replied, 'Err the ice-cream?'



I went on to Hillcrest Preparatory and Secondary Schools, and can truthfully tell you I loved school! I did water ballet,



painted sets for school plays,



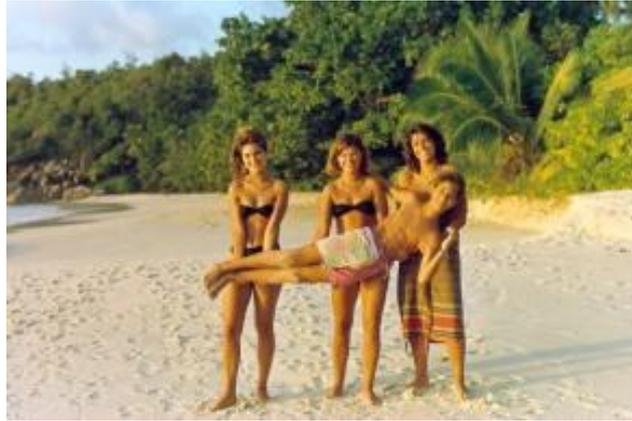
and first stood on stage. This is 'The Happiest Days of Your Life' circa 1984. By the time I was sixteen, I knew the stage was my home and told my parents I wanted to go to Drama School. 'Forget it!' they said.



So I went to Oxford University instead, and read science. It blew my mind. I partied, travelled, and after I graduated 3 years later, I started working in advertising, in London.



But the call of home brought me back to Kenya and I started working for Fast Forward Productions, making commercials that all seemed to feature women in bath-tubs over-flowing with bubbles. I couldn't find a photo of that, so I put this one here instead so you can see you how good I once looked in a bikini!



Eventually, I had enough of bubbles, and I started a furniture company. One night, in a Chinese restaurant with friends, I met Lorenzo, the man who would become my husband.



We gave each other this little treasure; Ignazio



and this one; Bianca.



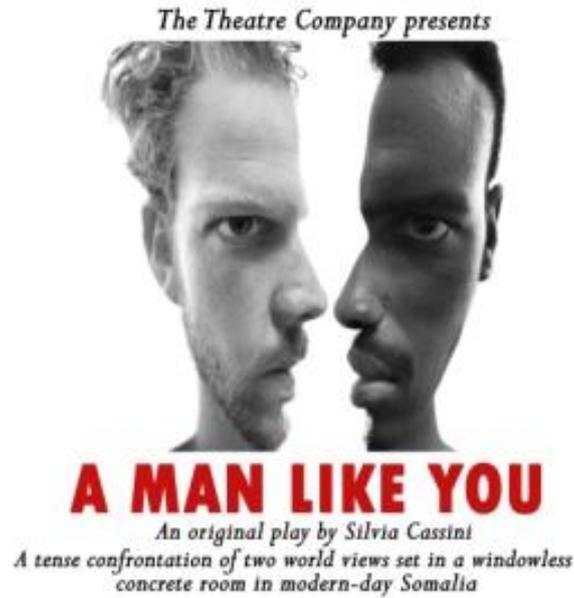
Sadly, Lorenzo and I weren't forever happy, and we eventually went our separate ways. These two helped me through some hard times.



One morning in 2014, I woke up to the reality that I hadn't stood on stage for 23 years. I cried. Then I called Nairobi City Players and asked what they were doing. I was back! And now, I did something else I'd been wanting to for a very long time. I started writing... and kept writing...



and finished a play entitled A Man Like You. It led me on a great adventure. First performed in Nairobi in March 2016,



it went to New York that July, then round the world in 2017...



to Harare,



Cape Town,



Hong Kong,



and Kampala.



It even won some awards.



I threw myself into theatre then,



both acting



and directing, and was lucky to be able to keep doing it even after I moved to France in 2018. Of course I did not stop writing. Life was good. Then, in 2020, Covid swept the world. I became a hostage in my own house, like we all did. It was hard. But it brought me here, to Toastmasters, and to you my fellow inmates. Lockdown has meant our story now starts. Thank you for the invitation to go on this journey together. It will mean that soon you will know who I am, and I will know who you are, without having to ask.