





## wild walk

put her on my lap and we drove away.

The whole incident resounded with *déjà vu*. Three years before, I had found Tapiwa in exactly the same pitiful state, at exactly the same age and with exactly the same colouring and looks. Friends had encouraged me to find him a companion, but somehow I knew I'd find a dog on my walk that I couldn't leave. This was she.

She was very sick. We headed for the nearest village in the hope of finding her some help, but that turned out to be naïve – the few vets that Botswana has are in big towns and cities. So we made camp under another stunning granite *kopje* while the newest member of our travelling band slept like the dead. I phoned my sister Shirley in Johannesburg.

"Hydration is critical," she said. "Squirt a solution of sugar water into her mouth every few hours and hope that you can stimulate her appetite. Keep her warm and, most importantly, give her a cuddle from me."

I decided that night to name her Mpho, the Setswana word for "gift", just as Tapiwa means "gift" in Shona. Lucky little princess – she soon had a day nurse, a night nurse and a babysitter pandering to her every need. Tapiwa, however, was not at all enamoured. Mindful of the necessity of reinforcing his position as top dog in camp, I gave him extra attention and affection, but he growled menacingly at the emaciated form at the furthest corner of our tent.

*Sunday, 29 May. Four days since the rescue and Mpho is bouncing back in fine style. She's taking solids now. Lying in the sun at my feet as I write, her tummy a round ball and her bones already receding from view. Hasn't uttered a sound yet, but her tail goes constantly and her good eye shines with enthusiasm. I bought her a grey blanket and a large plastic wash basin where she sleeps between feasts.*

*This story might have a happy ending...*



### WEEK 12, 30 MAY – 5 JUNE

Mpho was coming along in literal leaps and bounds. Tapiwa was beginning to play with "that woman" when he thought we weren't looking. But having her with us was already proving to be a logistical challenge. Dogs are not allowed through Botswana's vet fences without a rabies inoculation but a visit to the government vet in Shoshong revealed that they didn't keep these vaccines. We'd have to go to Serowe, some 100km! Well, that wasn't on my path, so Mpho would just have to wait for her vaccination "passport", and until such time, I would just have to smuggle her through the fences. And so, the canine contraband smugglers moved out of Shoshong.

### WEEK 13, 6–12 JUNE

*Digging deep now – really deep for the first time on the trip. The tar is like a bitumen hot-plate, the soles of my feet are scalded and bruised, thigh bones feel like they're shunting through my hips. I'm so exhausted.*

I had hit what runners call "The Wall" and I continued to bang my head against it for three long days. I was superbly fit, eating and sleeping well and loving every minute of being out on the road. So why was this happening?

I needed to speak to someone who knew how to scale The Wall. I turned to Bruce Fordyce, SA's premier marathon champion. "Just keep walking, Tricia," he bellowed down our bad line. "Whatever happens, you must not stop, regardless of the pain. Because if you stop you'll never get going again. Keep walking." So I did. Hour after hour. And sure enough, three days later I blasted through the bricks of The Wall feeling suddenly – miraculously – like it had never been there in the first place.

We also blasted into the first vet fence we had to get Mpho through undetected. Sue and I hatched a plan. I would stride up to the guards as the advance decoy, regale

them with the tale about my walk and forewarn them that my back-up vehicle was right behind me, during which time Sue would drive through with a cheery wave. We waited until the dogs were asleep on the back seat and swung into action. It worked.

*Our new camp is in the only clearing in the bush for kilometres. It must have been the site of an old kraal. Like Taps, Mpho has worked out how far she can wander without being in danger. She has no fixed abode, but all the confidence of a dog whose home is where her heart is. They're good chums now. I cannot describe the sense of peace and privilege you get after a long day in the sun, followed by a shower, then a whiskey by the fire with your two dogs curled at your feet. Nothing comes close to beating the feeling. I'm so lucky to be here that I'm sometimes quite overcome. ☺*

### talking the walk...

**How did your journey change you internally?**

When you walk alone in Africa's great outdoors for up to 10 hours a day for four and a half months, you become acutely aware of how intimately your life, your conduct and your psyche are bound up with the greater whole. This manifests in an awareness that your thoughts and behaviour impact everything around you. I changed profoundly as a consequence of this revelation. I became a vegetarian in response to the appalling animal cruelty involved in current farming practices and the devastating environmental damage that has occurred since my ancestors were here. I now also watch what I burn (at home, in my car), that I shop ethically, that I mind my sharp tongue (not altogether successfully, it has to be said!).

**And externally?** I trained hard for five months prior to departure, weight training at the gym and building up my walking distances until I could do 30km a day, back to back for three days. On the trip I only lost 1kg because of muscle gain, but my hips slimmed down considerably.

**How are your canine companions?** Mpho continues to thrive. She's a hooligan and a butter ball, and Tapiwa often wonders what I see in her!

**Future plans?** I have yet to find sponsors for my next project, but I hope it will be a walk with a strong focus on elephants and on the women of Africa.

*Footing with Sir Richard's Ghost* (Sharp Sharp Media) is available through [patricia.glyn@wo1.co.za](mailto:patricia.glyn@wo1.co.za) or Exclusive Books.