

Penny Lattimer had just bought the last of the linen she required and new shoes for her two teenage boys at Herreros in La Orotava when the heavens opened and it began to pour with rain.

They started to run down the slippery cobbles in the direction of the car but realised it was a futile effort and stepped gratefully into the portico of an old town mansion. It was early April 1966 and they had only recently arrived to live in Tenerife where Sam Lattimer had been posted to set up what was to become a very successful distribution centre for a major Japanese vehicle manufacturer. The two boys, Jamie and Peter were 17 and 15 respectively and about to return to school in England for the summer term.

It was a beautiful entrance to what was evidently one of the town's magnificent wealthy mansions and they peered through a wrought iron gate into a central patio. It was lush with potted ferns and a delightful Roman fountain whose cascading water was no match for the heavy shower. The rain ceased as suddenly as it had arrived and instead of stepping out into the street again Penny and her sons

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILLS

The pink Stradivarius

□ By John Young

were captured, not by the hypnotising sound of water made by the fountain, but by Beethoven. A piano was accompanying a cello from a room somewhere above.

After a few moments, Penny, who had herself been a cellist in her youth in Birmingham, exclaimed. "Good God, I can't believe it. That's got to be a Stradivarius. Listen to the vibration. Nothing sounds quite the same."

The sun began to shine through the gate and sent shivers through the boy's mother as she stood paralysed by the perfection of the music and her memory of days gone by. But her trance was quietly interrupted by a maidservant, dressed in black and white uniform. She opened the gate and bade them enter.

"Pase, por favor", she said leading them up a wide wooden staircase to the right and onto the gallery overlooking the central Spanish patio. The music came from the other side but the Lat-

timers were led into a huge living room with exquisite French furniture and walls covered with glorious oils and water colours. With the little Spanish they had learnt they understood from the

If music
be the
food of
love...

girl that la señora would be with them in a moment.

"I am terribly sorry to have kept you waiting but I was still in my dressing gown when you took shelter in my porch. I am Antonia Monteverde. Would you join me for coffee?" As Penny Lattimer discovered in the following years, only someone educated by an English nanny, as so many wealthy islanders were in the early to middle part of the 19th century, could speak such

melodious and distinguished English. The cello was being played by Emilia, her youngest daughter. She was just thirteen and practicing with her music teacher for a forthcoming concert.

"You must meet her, and Emilia would just love to know your boys!"

Of course that was the last thing Jamie and Peter wanted to hear. They just needed to get down to Puerto and to the beach as quickly as possible. But they were polite young fellows and followed the Spanish lady and their mother to the music room. Again it was a huge space. They peered through the doorway until invited to interrupt the lesson. The sunlight played with dust particles floating in the air to the melancholy sounds coming from the cello. An elderly lady at the piano concentrated on the music in front of her. There were no paintings on the wall, just two violins, another cello, percussion instruments and an old guitar sitting



on very bohemian looking armchairs. Emilia's head, a mass of long chestnut hair, was bowed over the cello held tenderly between her legs. The sounds she produced by arching the bow back and forth over the strings would make even the

toughest of men surrender. Perhaps it was how she wore a loose man's jumper which came to just above her knees or her feet bare on the wooden floorboards. But when the piece finally ended and Emilia looked up she left both boys knowing

fly to the uk

from €46
one way inc. tax

gatwick
luton
manchester
birmingham

flights

holidays

hotels

+ more

monarch.co.uk