

# HEPHZIBAH ANDERSON

MEMOIR

## Meet Me In The In-Between

Bella Pollen Mantle £18.99

★★★★★



Going into labour with her third child, novelist Bella Pollen (right and below) is disturbed to find that instead of babygrows and a nursing bra, she has filled her hospital bag with boots and a passport. Her lifelong passion for adventure and freedom is once again kicking against the confines of conventional family life.

Pollen is an engagingly contradictory tangle: a feminist who secretly loves being whistled at by men on building sites, an adventurer with zero sense of direction, a crusading reporter who stops to shop for kitchenware in the middle of an assignment.

But it's her pathological fear of being boxed in, and her propulsive push-pull relationship with home – one that's sure to resonate especially sharply with women – that define her.

*Meet Me In The In-Between* is an idiosyncratic memoir – the result of an attempt to overcome crippling writer's block – that takes us from Pollen's upbringing by transatlantic parents in Manhattan to the current day, when she is a bestselling author living in London. Along the way she tells tales of breaking into a Navajo reservation, fleeing murderous people-smugglers, and wrangling with a vodka-tipping parrot.

Pollen once had her own fashion line. She's too modest to remind us here, but Arabella Pollen was worn by Princess

Diana and Marianne Faithfull. Then she fell for an art dealer and horse gambler who had been chased out of Italy by bookies.

'Giacomo burned intensity as though it were fuel,' she writes. Beneath the smoulder was a volcanic temper, and after two children she needed out of the marriage. She was ready to turn her back on the 'ephemeral buzz' of fashion, too, becoming instead a novelist – with great success.

But despite happily remarrying and having two more children, Pollen continued to wrestle with the bolting instinct. She took to staying alone in the holiday home she and her second husband Mac had built thousands of miles away on a Colorado mountainside. When that no longer slaked her thirst for freedom and danger, she became obsessed with chronicling the plight of illegal immigrants trying to enter the US from Mexico.

As she edges into her mid-50s and tries to make peace with her wild, other self, the stories keep coming, ranging from the chilling (her encounter with a crystal meth matriarch) to the delightfully farcical (tracking a gangster named El Duck in Tijuana, she finds she's muddled her poultry – it's El Ganso, the goose, that she's after).

Perhaps it's no surprise that by the end of this poignant, beautifully written memoir, the author has a new-found appreciation for stability and balance.



THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

