



The Lives and Loves of Rosalinda Sprint

Naples 1977: Rosalinda Sprint is a Neapolitan phenomenon - a *femminiello*. A true force of nature, as unstoppable as an avalanche. An inveterate optimist oblivious to all life's contradictions. Stubborn and ignorant, comic and tragic. Rosalinda Sprint wears her heart on her sleeve like a flag of defiance.

We meet the delectable Rosalinda as she prepares to leave Naples and join the love of her life in England. Between fittings for her new wardrobe and nights working on the street, she is confronted with her past, her present and, possibly, her future. Memories lurk at every corner, slip out of drawers and boxes to remind her of how she left her family behind in the Neapolitan slums to become Rosalinda Sprint, the most attractive young transvestite in Naples.

Rosalinda learns about life on the streets under the protection of her friend Sayonara, who introduces her to a new life as an 'irregular' lady of the night. She is embraced by a new social milieu, making friends as well as foes among this colourful, neurotic, restless cast of characters. This hysterically gossipy Greek chorus of irregulars pops up regularly to dispense advice, dish the dirt and constantly bitch about each other. Rosalinda's education is complete when she is taken under the wing of the commanding Marlenedietrich, doyenne of all Neapolitan femminiellos.

Still, it's love that matters most to Rosalinda. She has a wealth of love to give and expects to get just as much in return, although she finds it difficult to make the distinction between love and lust. And her past, present and future come in the shape of three men in particular.

There's Gennaro, her younger cousin, the first great love of her life. As beautiful as a Greek god, and a scoundrel as wicked as the devil. He lets Rosalinda seduce him at her father's funeral and then robs her and disappears. Yet Rosalinda has fallen head over heels for Gennaro and seeks him out in a Northern Italian town. But Gennaro is in love with another soldier and Rosalinda returns heartbroken to Naples, knowing she'll keep loving him forever – at least a little.

Then there's Jack, an English officer who works at the nearby NATO base. He's handsome and different from all the others. Jack loves her just as she is, especially without all the make-up and the wigs. After two years of passion, he is transferred back to England and begs her to join him – despite the fact he has a wife and two children. But Rosalinda doesn't speak a word of English and is scared to death (though she'll never admit it) at the thought of leaving her hometown. Still, Rosalinda Sprint fancies herself as a sophisticated international



jetsetter so much so that after much torment, and against Marlenedietrich's advice, she resolves to join her beloved 'on the White Cliffs of Dover'.

Again, fate intervenes. Just days before her departure, Rosalinda is presented with an alternative option for her future: Gaetano. Not as handsome as Jack, but so virile and manly, he is Rosalinda's ideal incarnate - "the shoe that fits my foot perfectly!" Gaetano takes her, leaves her and takes her again. He grabs her heart and plays havoc with it. Poor Rosalinda is totally confused. She does love Jack, but this strong and heartless Neapolitan rogue, who's a stud in bed but also a respectable young man from a wealthy family, brings her blood to boiling point and makes her heart beat furiously. Could it be that Gaetano really is her future?

As she flails about like a moth blinded by a swinging light bulb, looking for a sign which will lead her to true love and eternal happiness, we fret with Rosalinda. Will she make the right choice? Will she find out what she really wants?

The Lives and Loves of Rosalinda Sprint is Rosalinda's paeon to Love and Naples, an exploding symphony of colours and emotions. Based on Giuseppe Patron Griffi's celebrated novel, *Down Toledo Way*, this is also a story of the 'golden age' of Italian gay life before the advent of AIDS. An age of carefree *joie de vivre* that was soon to change forever.

Rosalinda takes to the streets of Naples like a latter day version of Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* and its musical sister, *Sweet Charity*. The film's bold sweeps of colour, light, music, dance and a breathtaking pace, recall the spirit of *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* by way of *8 Femmes*, with a dash of the humour of the original *La Cage aux Folles*. But it is in Rosalinda's misplaced search of her identity that *The Lives and Loves of Rosalinda Sprint* brims with humanity, bringing to mind the films of such spiritual fathers as Pedro Almodovar especially, but also the early Lina Wertmuller and Federico Fellini himself.