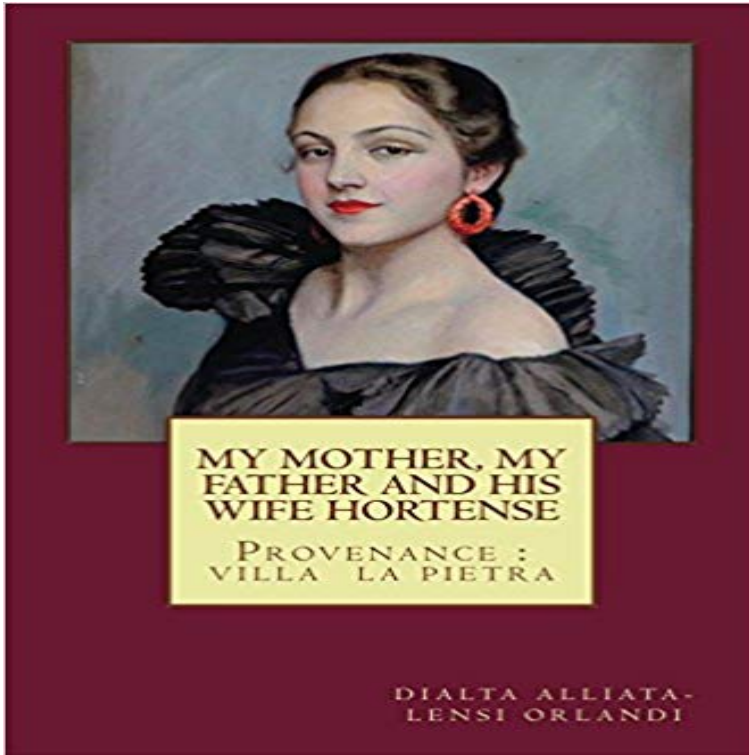


MY MOTHER,MY FATHER and HIS WIFE HORTENSE: PROVENANCE:VILLA LA PIETRA



In this fierce and poignant book, the author, drawing on sources that include her grandmothers richly erotic diaries, unveils intimate details of the Acton dynasty in Florence, the illicit love affair of Arthur and Elsie, and the controversial legal aftermath that continues to this day. A true family saga played out against the backdrop of Florence's celebrated Villa La Pietra. The struggle over the billion dollar estate of one of the 20th century's most notable aesthetes, Harold Acton, pitted New York University, against first Liana Beacci, Acton's illegitimate half-sister, and since her death in 2000 her daughter, Princess Dialta Alliata di Montereale, who lives in Honolulu. It began its progress through the Italian legal system soon after Acton's death in 1994 with more downs than ups for the family. But a recent reworking of Italian inheritance laws, to make them internally coherent and to bring them into accord with European protocols, promises a dramatic conclusion and sooner rather than later. It was always a story in which reality was more colourful than fiction. You will find it in *My Mother, My Father and His Wife Hortense: The True Story of the Villa La Pietra* (Amazon), a vivid book by Dialta Lensi Orlandi, who is now Princess Dialta di Montereale. In fifty chapters, against the historical and social backdrop of art, glamour, war, and international intrigue, the lives of the Beaccis and the Actons are woven together through the eyes of a third-generation family member, Dialta Lensi Orlandi, granddaughter of Arthur Acton and daughter of Liana Beacci. The tale encompasses the fate of Acton's estate, an appalling betrayal, and the continuing fight to restore justice and dignity to Acton's legacy and the Beacci family name. Arthur Acton, Dialta's grandfather, was an art dealer, married to Hortense Mitchell, a Chicago heiress, but who came to dislike

both art and her husbands home in Florence. Dialta's mother was born to Arthur Acton's lifelong mistress, Ersilia. Her half-brother, Harold Acton, the model for Anthony Blanche in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, and who had been host at La Pietra to Princess Diana and Pablo Picasso, was acquainted with his relations and tried to thwart their inheritance. In 2003 the court of Florence allowed the bodies of Liana and Arthur to be dug up for DNA tests. These established with the highest degree of probability that Liana was Arthur Acton's daughter and a surprise ending.

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