

» Camden People | Model-turned-novelist Emily Barroso talks to Paul Harper

Modelling in London was like being thrown to crocodiles

But I arrived with £25 in my pocket and didn't look back



■ Emily Barroso

A model-turned-novelist has written an award-winning book based on her experiences of growing up in Zimbabwe.

Emily Barroso is the author of *After The Rains* which tells the story of a young girl facing difficulties growing up in the former British colony of Rhodesia.

Emily, of Laxton Place, Regent's Park, left the country aged 12 in 1980 when it became the independent state of Zimbabwe.

She said: "The book is a work of fiction but builds on a collective Rhodesian and Zimbabwean experience and also some of the catastrophic events which impacted my step father directly."

"I explore why some white and black people who grew up in apartheid swim up stream and forge different identities and why others decide to conform."

She grew up with an English mother Johanne and her step-father Paul came from a wealthy British family. Emily

Barroso says: "I lived in the city but when we travelled to see my stepdad's family in the country we would go by convoys with women holding guns out the back of the trucks."

"It could be scary. As a white girl in Africa you get a sense of dislocation and I always clung to my British side, becoming interested in the country's humour, music and culture."

The family moved to South Africa where Emily forged a successful career as a fashion and magazine model. She adds: "I came to London with £20 in my pocket and never looked back."

"I have lived in Camden for 25 years. Camden had a really interesting music scene in the 1990s and I dated guys in bands before starting my own group which performed in Dublin Castle and Camden Underground."

"It was a hedonistic time but eventually I ended up homeless."

Emily took a masters' degree in creative writing and



■ Emily Barroso with husband Simon: "I always clung to my British side"

won the Jerwood/Avon Young Writers Apprenticeship in 2005 for *After the Rains*.

She adds: "It was like being thrown to the crocodiles modelling in London compared to my experience in Cape Town."

"You realise you are just flesh and bones and focus on

being skinny and looking a certain way."

"You lose some of your creativity and intellect and stop doing things in a creative way. And I had always loved writing growing up as a young girl."

Emily has two children Luca, 14, and Grace, two, and is married to Simon.

Could you be a foster carer?

