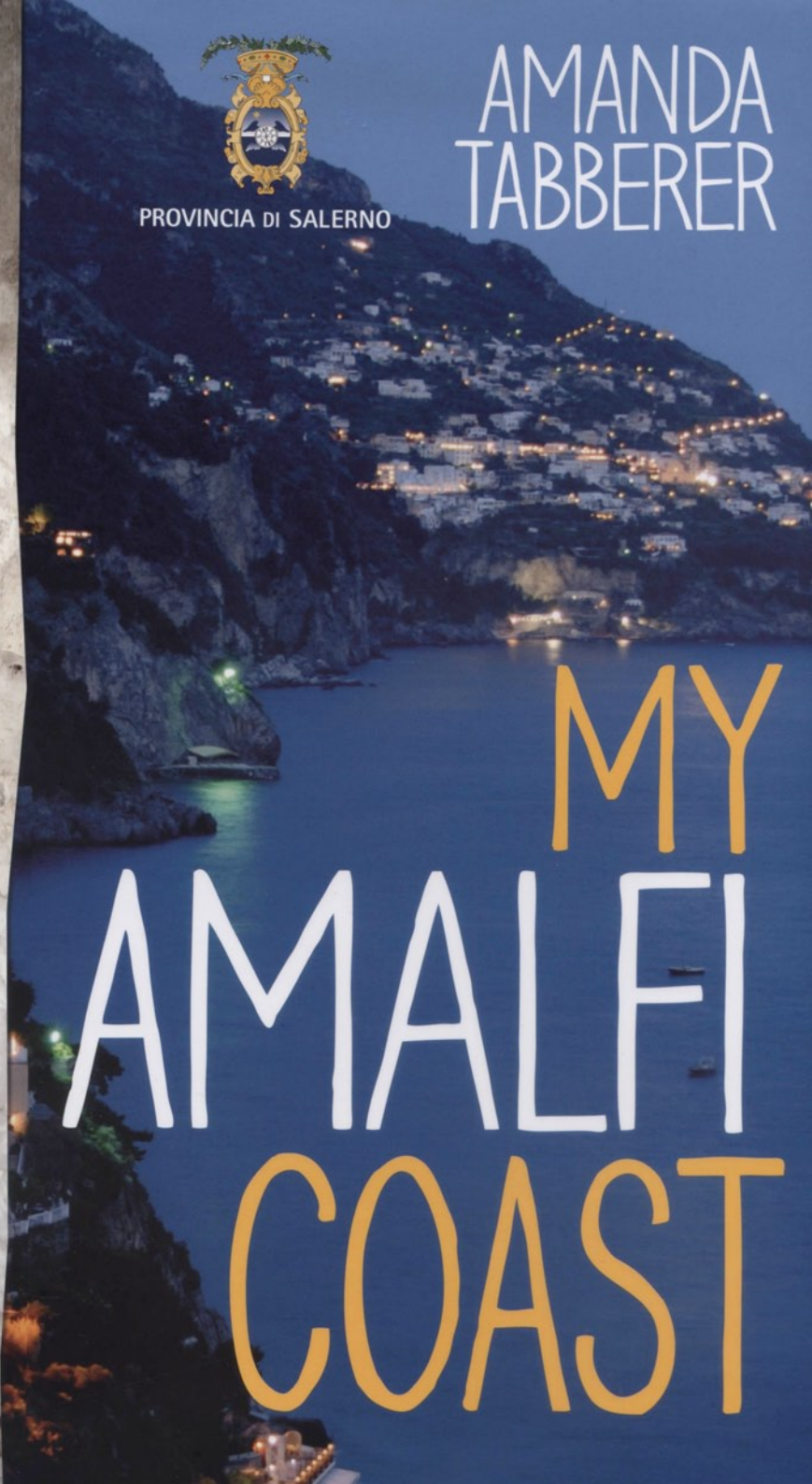




PROVINCIA DI SALERNO

AMANDA  
TABBERER



MY  
AMALFI  
COAST



kings and princes, really came into its own in the early twentieth century when Ernest William Beckett – later to become Lord Grimthorpe – took possession of it. He set out to make Cimbrone and its surroundings ‘the most beautiful place in the world’, and it became a haven for many prominent artists, writers and statesmen. Salvador Dalí, D.H. Lawrence, Gianni Agnelli, Virginia Woolf and Winston Churchill all stayed at this villa at one time or another. Today it is run as a five-star hotel, and is still renowned for its magnificent terrace and its lush manicured park studded with impressive statues.

For a beautiful, professionally organised wedding in a fairytale garden, the **Villa Eva**, just next door to Cimbrone, is another excellent spot. And if money is no object, the newly renovated **La Rondinaia** (which up until recently was owned by Gore Vidal), could be the treat of a lifetime. This unique villa hangs suspended over the Amalfi Coast and is a gentle walk from the main part of town. It sleeps twenty, so you can put up the entire wedding party here, and with personal service, its own restaurant and five-star spa, it is sheer luxury.

## CAMEOS

While exploring the villas and backstreets of this wonderful town with my mother Maggie recently, our first stop was an iconic jewellery shop that sells incredible cameos, corals and turquoise, **The Cameo Factory**. Neither of us is a cameo girl, but the large coral beads threaded into a long necklace in the window grabbed our attention. While Mum moved around the store admiring its beautiful pieces I struck up a conversation with the owner, Giorgio Camo, who was seated behind his workbench strewn with numerous ancient cameo-crafting tools. Elegantly dressed in cream linen, and with an impressive walking cane resting close by, he gave the impression of having stepped straight out of a Visconti film. Giorgio told me that he had owned and run this shop for nearly forty years. He gave us a rundown on coral in this area – apparently it is almost impossible now to find the beautiful large chunks of coral required to make a necklace such as the one in the window. Meanwhile my eyes wandered over pictures of the many famous faces on the walls. Giorgio told us that Hillary Clinton is among his regular customers.

He insisted we inspect the small coral museum at the back of the store, which opened twenty-odd years ago and has since become quite an attraction. He showed us his centuries-old religious icons and filigree delicacies, some dating as far back as Roman times. Among his treasures are a seventeenth-century crucifix, a beautiful Madonna figure from the mid-1500s and a Roman amphora. Each piece is beautifully inlaid with coral or shell. While he was showing us around, Giorgio kept discreetly looking at the very long strand of turquoise I was wearing. Before we left he delicately told me that they were not real turquoise but made with turquoise paste. I was crushed!



### BRIC-A-BRAC

Also in the main piazza of Ravello is *the bric-a-brac shop* of the area. This labyrinthine store sells everything from beautiful handmade writing paper from Amalfi to wrought-iron bedheads and antique tables and tiles. It is a great place to spend an hour or two wandering around, and they'll ship goods anywhere in the world.