

Time
and placeSophie
Dahl

My first official flatshare was when I left home at 18 in 1996 and went to live in a small one-bedroom flat with my great school friend Iris Palmer. I had been living in Balham up to that point, with my mother. I'd lived in 17 houses with a mother who was a nomad, so moving felt familiar.

The idea was that I would attend secretarial college for a year, with a view to getting some skills. When I told Iris about the plan, she suggested I room with her. It shows how young and naive we were; such good friends, we both thought a flat with one double bed between us was a good idea.

I moved into the first-floor premises in a Victorian terrace on Chamberlayne Road, in Kensal Rise. It was sandwiched between the Tile Shop, on the ground floor, and another flat above. Iris, whom I'd met at Bedales, was a successful model and was often abroad, flitting around Rome, Milan or Paris, so our unconventional arrangement seemed to work. I paid her £30 a week — it all seemed very grown-up and glamorous.

The sitting room overlooked the main street and was a green colour, with a wooden bench and no TV. Our cosy bedroom was small, quite dark and filled with shawls. In the distance was the train station, and we often heard the sound of trains or buses.

Every morning I would take the bus to Earls Court to study, or skive off and drink coffee at Lisboa, in Notting Hill. Iris was untidy, I was fastidious. She would often come home and I would be like a beleaguered wife, picking up her clothes. Lenienced cooking

Just before starting the course, I'd bumped into Isabella Blow, the fashion icon, who had set Iris up with a meeting with Sarah Doukas, from Storm Models. I was toying with the idea of modelling. I certainly wasn't enjoying the secretarial course and, after a couple of months, I dropped out. In my spare time I was writing — I loved putting together short stories and poems, though I didn't think I'd ever be published at that point.

Iris and I spent New Year together, but by the spring I'd decided to find a new place. Neither of us had a boyfriend, so sharing a bed, wearing long Victorian nightdresses and cheerfully bidding each other goodnight was fine for a while, but I was glad when I found a flatshare in Battersea with my own room.

I signed up for Storm later that year and my modelling career took off. Years later, I returned to Kensal Rise and bought a property there. By then the area had definitely gone up in the world — it was full of florists and gastropubs. When I started dating my husband [the jazz pianist Jamie Cullum] in 2007, we were delighted to discover that we both lived in Kensal Rise. I remember walking past the old flat on the way to his. It still seemed to harbour all the potent teenage emotions of the time, boxed up in prim Victorian bricks.

I look back on that time with great warmth — not nostalgically, because I'm far happier now. I hadn't a clue what I was doing, and I had a wildness that has gone with age and stability. I will always be grateful to Iris, who was inherently sensible, sisterly and kind to me. We've remained friends ever since.

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Movin



Alexandra Goss



Rihanna and Kim
Kardashian have both
stayed at this estate in
the Dominican Republic

RiRi's retreat
£12m beach pad

When **Rihanna** wanted to kick back away from the prying eyes of the paparazzi last month, the superstar singer rented this snazzy pad in the Dominican Republic for a week of solitude. Punta Minatas, on the five-star Casa de Campo resort, has seven bedrooms and extends over 35,000 sq ft. The property has a private beach, staff quarters and its own “temperature-controlled museum”, which houses artefacts from the island, as well as a vast pool and a garage with room for 16 cars. The villa, which was used as the setting for episodes of **Kim Kardashian's** reality television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* last year, is now on the market for a cool \$19.5m (£12.1m).

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