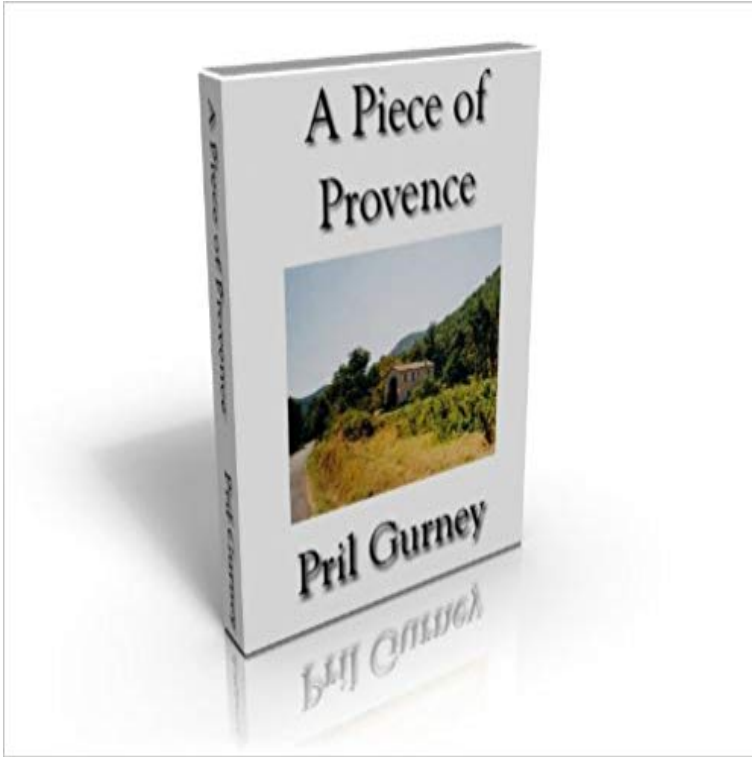


A Piece of Provence



A Piece of Provence by Pril Gurney. In 1989, Pril and her husband Tom travel to Southern Provence to find a holiday home and a place for their future retirement. They come across a two hundred year old bastide among the beautiful Maures Hills eight miles from St Tropez. Falling in love with the beauty of the area they buy it. However the rigours of the French bureaucratic system and the quirks of nature make it a struggle to realise their dream. Beset by fire, water and an antagonistic Mayor they plough on determined to overcome the obstacles put in their path. Setting it on fire even before they have paid for it, the ancient heating boiler then floods the house. Not to be put off they fight on regardless even when robbers completely ransack the house taking all their carefully collected furniture. After two years of renovation and despite errant French workman they take their first paying guests and begin serving evening meals on the terrace. The guests bring more problems but the house turns into a place of laughter and fun as the family visit and new friends are made. Amusing incidents abound as strangers try to buy the house which is not for sale and an object resembling a landmine leads to a visit from the Military. Pril's father mistakes a carpet salesman for a plumber and the poor man is dragged into the bathroom. They decide to become French farmers and buy vines and a small cabin beside the vineyards. However growing grapes is not as easy as expected and bugs and wild boar destroy the first harvest. Returning from a day out in Italy, they return to find a forest fire ravaging the area. Disaster follows disaster and the next harvest is destroyed by a wall of water careering down the valley taking everything in its path, including caravans and cars from the nearby holiday camp. The big clean up that follows makes them realise that farming is not for them and they discover that the end wall of the house

is moving. Restoration costs are far too high and sadly they decide to sell the vines. The mayor intervenes and they are forced to sell at a loss. As a last resort they try and buy an old ruin in the hills but even this eludes them and they return sadly to England.

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