

lifestyle makeover

coastline. They huddled together under their makeshift shelter, water dripping off their bodies. And, if you think that behind the scenes, the celebs were being given soap and shampoo, you are mistaken – even the camera crew wasn't allowed to wear deodorant.

"I once followed one of the camera men as he walked around the camp filming – I don't know what he used on his clothes, but he just smelled so clean," Ashley pipes up.

And while they can laugh and joke about it now, the experience was sobering for them all. "It makes you realise just how lucky we are," Ashley explains, as the other two murmur in agreement. "You know, we all have lots to moan about in our day-to-day lives. But then, you do something like this and it's pretty grim. You are eating what you scrounge up, you are cold, you are tired. This is just a glimpse of what thousands of South Africans live like every day," she adds, her eyes tearing up.

For all three women, the experience made them look a little differently at the world, and taught them a little something more about themselves. Which takes us back to Ashley's opening comment: "I am a nice person. Truly, I am."

Having watched the edited account of their experience, Ashley realises just how devious and manipulative she was. But, she's quick to add that the person

we saw on screen is not who she really is. She describes how she "packed herself away in a box" and let her darker side come out to play. "I disregarded my core character," she adds. What made it all the more interesting is that her teammates completely underestimated her. She shrugs her shoulders lightly as she mentions that she did things that the real-world Ashley would never do, but it was a game and she had a clear goal in sight. "I had to mend a couple of bridges once we were off the island, but I think things are all sorted now," she says, her eyes sliding sideways to her two teammates.

As she sits, barefaced, waiting for her turn with the make-up artist, I remark on how smooth and glowing her skin is – she looks positively healthy. She raises a disbelieving eyebrow: "I suppose washing with sand and sea water helps. That, and the fact that you don't put anything onto your skin except for sunscreen. No toxins on the skin gives it a chance to detox, I guess."

The mingy diet, consisting of boiled fish, crab, oysters and the "odd little bit of carbs" meant that Ashley went from 22 percent body fat to just eight percent. "I'm all for being slender, but this was painfully thin. I remember looking down at myself and exclaiming: 'My body ate my boobs for lunch!'. Luckily, I found them again once I got off the island," she adds,

puffing out her chest. GiGi just laughs.

But, for Ashley, the most remarkable change was in discovering that she was more adaptable and adventurous than she gave herself credit for. And she has the war wounds to prove it. In one of the challenges, wind gusted up, blowing the wooden blocks she was working with. One block slammed into her head, splitting the side of her face. As she tells the story, she lifts her hair to show the evidence. "I wiped the blood and carried on going – very dramatic!" After they stopped filming, the on-site medic called for the suture kit. "I told them to stay away – there was no way I was having stitches, so they glued it shut instead," she adds matter-of-factly.

"Now, I am much more willing to try new stuff, something I never thought I would do." She shares how she has since gone swimming in a waterfall and climbed a rock wall built into the side of a friend's house – two fearless activities she says she never would have considered before *Survivor*. "I have discovered so much about myself," she smiles.

Next up is GiGi – who had arrived that morning beautifully dressed, make-up and hair perfectly in place. "This is me casual," she replies when her outfit is remarked on. She crosses her legs gracefully and smiles widely. It's hard to believe that she is a former exotic dancer, and owns one of the most

ASHLEY HAYDEN

'This is just a glimpse of what thousands of South Africans live like every day'



In its third season, the reality show saw celebs vying for R500 000 for themselves and a further R500 000 for a charity of their choice. Ashley (pictured here after being injured in a challenge) chose to support The Homestead – Projects for Street Children.

