

Diana – The Last Word

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Extract

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I

JFK

Behind the shy glances, the radiant smiles and the occasional tears, the glamour and the good works that went to make up her public image, lay the passions which made Diana the extraordinary woman that she was.

She wanted to be loved, but more than anything she wanted to *give* love. To the deprived and disadvantaged; to her sons, William and Harry; to her husband, Prince Charles, if only he had allowed her to – and to men with whom she became romantically involved.

I know, because Diana told me. Sitting on the floor, perched on the edge of her bed, sitting on the sofa or in the kitchen, eating the occasional Italian takeaways and microwaved ready meals and drinking endless cups of herbal tea, we would talk for hours on end about her hopes, her cares, her interests and her love affairs. She held nothing back. She was far too open-hearted to bottle up her feelings. If a project caught her interest or a man her eye, she wanted to discuss it, right down to the frankest detail.

And, as is the way when two friends are gossiping, one topic would lead easily into another. That is how she came to tell me of the fling she had with John Kennedy Jr.

Diana and I were in her sitting room at Kensington Palace. She was wearing a pair of stylish yet comfortable beige suede ankle boots, a pair of jeans and a V-necked cashmere sweater that cost a great deal of money. We were sitting for a change on the sofa rather than on the floor when she brought up the subject of the remarkable woman she admired: Jackie Kennedy Onassis. She couldn't understand how she could have wed Aristotle Onassis, 'that Greek Frog', as she called him, especially after she had been married to Jack Kennedy.

She described the late president as 'delicious' and from there the conversation moved on to his son, John Jr.

She asked me what I thought of him and I said that I didn't really have an opinion as I didn't know him. She had a picture of him pulled from one of the newspapers she had delivered every morning, pointed at it and said, 'He's very good-looking isn't he?'

She had met him in New York in 1995 when he was trying to persuade her to give an interview to his magazine, *George*. She turned down the request for the interview but agreed to meet him in her suite at the Carlyle Hotel on the Upper East Side.

Diana was staying at one of the penthouse suites with large plate-glass windows looking over Central Park and across the Manhattan skyline to the Twin Towers. The rooms, with a grand piano in one, were elegantly furnished in the manner of a private house rather than in the bland style favoured by so many hotels. The room was \$3200 a night, which Diana thought expensive.

When Kennedy arrived she was bowled over by his easy American charm and the physique he worked so hard to keep in shape. She told me, 'We started talking, one thing led to another – and we ended up in bed together. It was pure chemistry.'

Diana was usually very circumspect in her courtships and approached them cautiously, insisting on getting to know the man and then examining her feelings to see if she really wanted to make an emotional commitment before she was prepared to make a sexual one.

Diana had given the Royal Family something that it was conspicuously lacking, which was sex appeal. She was the Ginger Rogers to Charles's Fred Astaire in the way that she brought glamour and romance to a dull, dusty institution. And as she made the transformation from a shy bride into a beautiful and mature woman, she came to like the effect she had on people and the way that men started to look at her. But there was always something of the ingénue about her. She did not have real womanly confidence, and, although she could be an outrageous flirt, there was always an innocence about her. Not every woman is aware of her sexuality, and Diana really was not aware that she had any real sex appeal.

With Kennedy it was different. He made her feel desirable, wanton and very womanly. It was, she admitted, a moment of pure lust – the only time in her life that she succumbed in that way.

My mouth dropped open. I was so flabbergasted that for a few seconds I couldn't say anything. She had just started seeing Hasnat Khan and, although there

had been no real physical contact, she was very much in love with him which I thought would have precluded anyone else. I cried out, ‘What! You’re joking, aren’t you?’ and I really thought she was.

She replied, ‘No, I’m not. It happened. And he was an amazing lover – a ten, the tops.’

Diana was keen on that rating system. James Hewitt came in at nine, Oliver Hoare as a six. Hasnat Khan was saved the embarrassment of being rated. Prince Charles, on the other hand, barely made the chart at all.

Diana felt very pleased about her encounter with JFK Jr. She thought it was fantastic that for once she had got someone (other than Hasnat) whom she wanted, as opposed to being someone else’s catch. It put a notch on her belt and she was tickled pink that it was JFK, one of the best-looking and most sought-after men in America, with a real body beautiful that came from endless workouts in the gym. He was a year older than her and three inches taller, which counted for a lot because Diana didn’t like short men.

What gave their brief liaison an extra dimension was that she admired him and the way he had dealt with the pressures which came with being the son of America’s best-loved president. Looking to her eldest son and the responsibilities he was born to inherit, she said, ‘I’m hoping that William grows to be as smart as John Kennedy Jr. I want William to be able to handle things as well as John does.’

Being Diana, she naturally wanted to take the relationship further. She started fantasising about what a powerful team they would make, and how, if

everything went right, she could have become part of America's 'royal family'. On a trip to Washington she had been taken on a tour of the White House and told me afterwards, 'I would have loved it there,' and thought that, were Kennedy to follow his father into politics as everyone expected him to do, she might eventually become the First Lady of the United States.

Looking back, I wish I had asked her more, but the conversation then moved on to Grace Kelly and Diana's conviction, based, it must be said, on no evidence, that the former film star had been murdered when she let slip that she was planning to divorce her husband, Prince Rainier of Monaco. She identified with Kelly, a comparatively ordinary girl who had become a princess, just as Diana had.

She felt much the same about Jackie Kennedy, who had married a serial adulterer, yet succeeded in becoming an international symbol of grace and good taste. She thought Jackie O had been the perfect statesman's wife, a role that she imagined that she too might be able to perform with style and dignity as the consort of her son.

When she got back to England she had John's astrological chart prepared and discovered that because he was a Sagittarius and she had Sagittarius rising, they were compatible in a number of respects, but not enough to sustain the relationship.

Kennedy always spoke highly of the Princess and described her to friends as 'fascinating, stimulating and beautiful'. For a short while afterwards they stayed in touch: she telephoned and they had long chats across the Atlantic. But it is always difficult to maintain a

long distance relationship and there was never an encore. She had more love to give than any man could take, and when it came down to it, I think he found her too needy. I told her, ‘You want him 24/7 but let’s face it, unless you live in the United States you’re not going to get him 24/7 – and probably not even then.’

She accepted that reality and, instead of dwelling on what might have been, accepted her short liaison with Kennedy Jr for what it was – an exhilarating fling. The following year he married Carolyn Bassette and Diana wrote to wish him well. She hoped that his marriage would work out better than hers had. By then, of course, she had become deeply involved with Hasnat Khan, although he refused to consummate their relationship until her divorce came through.

I cannot help but wonder, though, what would have happened if Kennedy had been able to give her what she wanted, and she could have taken the stresses of being the consort of a Kennedy. They might both still be alive today.

It was not to be. Diana had her own life to live, with all that that entailed.