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The Lost Diaries

Edited by Craig Brown

Published by Fourth Estate

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The Lost Diaries

Edited by Craig Brown

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'The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another.'

J. M. BARRIE

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INTRODUCTION

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

It is a great honour for me to introduce this historic selection from the diaries of so many wonderful people.

Victoria Beckham, for instance, is one of The Spice Girls. The Spice Girls are five young ladies who sing as well as they dance.

When I met Victoria some years ago, she offered me gracious advice on how to broaden my appeal. I am most grateful for that, Victoria! She also told me how she had been in the forefront of the struggle for the Tibetan people. She even wore a T-shirt with a slogan printed in large orange letters which she assured me probably had something to do with Buddhism. For this I salute her!

On a personal note, I have also had the great honour of being presented to Mr Alan Yentob from the BBC. I was deeply touched when Alan asked me what I thought of the new Martin Amis, whether I had managed to catch up with the latest Gilbert and George exhibition at Tate Modern and if I had heard about the disappointing ratings for Melvyn Bragg's most recent *South Bank Show* on Andrew Lloyd Webber.

To think that such an illustrious personage would value my own humble opinion!

Yes, I was 'living the dream'!

Lady Heather Mills McCartney is another personal acquaintance. I am always delighted to hear her tell me how she was brought up by

wolves and triumphed against adversity to reach Number 1 in the Hit Parade and win the Booker Prize three years in a row. I congratulate Heather, also, on her recent news that she is the 'hot tip' to be the next Governor of the Bank of England.

Well done, Heather! You set us all an excellent example!

From the world of politics, Edwina Currie is a woman who knows what it is to engage in struggle. The last time we met, Edwina told me about her valiant campaign to improve the condition of eggs in the United Kingdom. If she had agreed not to speak out for what she truly believed, she would, she confessed, be Prime Minister. But this was a lady who was not prepared to compromise! She had too much compassion in her heart! We salute her!

There are many other good friends of mine included in this magnificent volume! Sir V.S. Naipaul is a very very nice man. When I was introduced to him on my last visit to Buckingham Palace, London, I clutched him to my bosom and kissed him on both cheeks as a brother. I shall never forget the way Vidia was so overcome with emotion that he swept from the room, too 'choked up' to speak!

I am also most humbled by Lord John Prescott, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain and now, he informs me, one of the leading world statesmen of our age, devoting himself to bringing peace to all mankind. When I met John and his lovely wife Tracey on a visit to Whitehall, London, I could see what a very close and loving couple they were! They bring me great joy!

And I honour, too, the British Royal Family. That most gracious lady, Her Majesty, must be so very proud that her children have all risen to the position of Princes and Dukes.

The Prince of Wales is a very wise man. He tells me he has introduced organic ginger biscuits to leading stores throughout the United Kingdom. These biscuits are available not just for the few, he says, but for the many. I support the Prince in his great quest to feed the people of the world!

So many splendid people, so many splendid achievements, and all chronicled in these personal diaries! Let us strive to follow their examples!

I do not like to single out any particular individual for praise, but we must surely all agree that there is one human being who has come to symbolise the spirit of Great Britain at its best. You will have guessed by now that I am speaking of the tireless philanthropist and human rights campaigner, Mr Max Clifford!

On my last visit to London, Max got in touch with me. He told me of how he had led the world campaign for a free Tibet. 'Believe me, Dalai, if it wasn't for *The Seventies Revival Show* starring the Bay City Rollers and Suzi Quatro touring live throughout Britain and Europe, you wouldn't have half the profile you have today,' he assured me. My heart overflowed with gratitude. He also offered to introduce me to the popular entertainer Mr Michael Barrymore, and through Michael I had the great honour to meet S Club 7, who have done so much to bring democracy, freedom and respect for human rights to all the people of the world.

And I haven't even mentioned that great film director Mr Michael Winner! His films have brought joy and consolation to countless millions, his aides tell me. Well done, Michael!

There is so much wisdom in this collection – and much of it arises from the depths of human suffering. I was upset to read of the stress of Stella McCartney. With all my heart, I beg each of you to stop asking her what it was like growing up as her father's daughter! The poor girl is hurting!

So many brilliant people, with so much to tell us about themselves!

I have spent many, many years teaching people about compassion and self-sacrifice. From reading these diaries I know, deep in my heart, that this is a lesson the world is crying out to learn!

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama
August 2010

January

January 1st

These cornflakes are real and they are everywhere. And I tell you this, Michelle, I say.

The packet may have been shaken, but the flakes will recover.

So it is with profound gratitude and great humility that I accept my breakfast cornflakes.

Michelle asks, do I want the milk? And to that I say this.

Our milk will come. Our milk will flow, and it will flow true. Our milk will flow smooth, and it will flow well-chilled.

But our milk will not flow if it is not poured.

So let me promise you this, Michelle. That milk will not pour itself over your flakes or my flakes. That milk will not pour itself over the flakes of the poor or the flakes of the rich, the flakes of the needy or the flakes of those folks who spend their lives in comfort. No, Michelle. To be poured, and, if the need has it, repoured, the jug in which that milk dwells must first be lifted by ourselves.

So, says Michelle, pour the milk any way you want, but I beg you, Barack, please get a move on.

I promise you this, Michelle, and this I promise you, I reply. I will indeed get a move on with pouring that milk. On the move to pour that milk, I shall ponder day and night. And I shall not rest until the day comes when that milk has, in truth, finally been poured.

BARACK OBAMA

The State of Britain, Part One: Just back from a New Year's Eve party. I don't often go to parties, because I'm not that kind of person, I'm a playwright, with more serious concerns. But I went to this one. By bus, of course. I'm not the sort of person who takes taxis. So I hailed a double-decker in the King's Road and told the driver to take me to Islington. He was then to wait for me outside the party for an hour or two and take me back. The instructions were quite clear. But of course this is Thatcher's Britain, so when I left the party – a party I didn't particularly enjoy, by the way, it was hardly serious at all and full of 'amusing' people – the bus was nowhere to be seen (typical) and I was forced to hail, against all my instincts, a black cab. Out of sympathy with the driver I sat with him in the front, observing, observing, observing, my mind racing back to one of those rare defining moments, disproportionately significant but peculiarly illuminating, that had occurred back at the party.

I had been standing in the corner of the room with the dirty paper cup I had specially brought with me, when a man had come over – a tall, flashy type, with an easy smile, wearing a fashionable 'tie'. He said: 'You look a bit lonely, may I introduce myself?' He then introduced himself. I didn't reply, preferring to observe, as most serious playwrights do. He then said – again that fake smile – 'And who are you?'

I was outraged, utterly outraged. And flabbergasted. Shocked, too. Shocked, outraged and flabbergasted. Not for me, of course, but for my profession, and the whole of British Theatre, from the lowest understudy right up to the most brilliant and dangerous playwright (whether that is me or not is beside the point). Why was this man – this man in his fashionable tie, with his promiscuous smile and his over-attentive handshake – pretending not to know who the hell I was? This was a sign of our inexorable national decline, as significant and painful in its way as the Miners' Strike or the Falklands Conflict.

The State of Britain, Part Two: As the hurt and the horror surged within me, I felt driven to speak. 'I'm David Hare,' I said.

'David Hare!' he repeated. 'Goodness! I really enjoy all your plays – you're one of the greatest living playwrights, in my opinion!'

Note that patronising, biased and artfully demeaning tone in a statement riddled with the foul odour of ruling-class condescension: 'ONE OF the greatest LIVING playwrights, IN MY OPINION'. Only in Britain – tired, sick, dislocated, dying Britain – in the 1980s could it be considered 'fashionable' to denigrate a serious playwright in this way. When I got home, I immediately wrote a cool letter to the host of the party, questioning his ethics in inviting me to a function at which there were people who openly hated me, roundly condemning his loathsome hypocrisy in not warning me of his treachery. He eventually replied with some sort of apology. Which all goes to show that here in Thatcher's Britain, the national pastime – the national characteristic – is to apologise, apologise, apologise. When will we as a nation have the courage to stand up for ourselves?

SIR DAVID HARE

It's now the Seventies. The Sixties – they seem like years ago, right? Years and years and years and years ago. Like literally ten years or even longer, right? But I remember them like they were yesterday, which was a Thursday, or was it a Monday? Can't remember. Tuesday – that's it. Or Sunday. Yesterday? Don't talk to me about yesterday – I'm not into the whole tomorrow thing.

KEITH RICHARDS

It is now 1960, the very first year in the extraordinary decade that will, I feel sure, come to be known as the 1960s. Overnight, society has shaken off the starchy sexual mores of the 1950s. Suddenly, young men and women are casting aside their inhibitions and tapping their toes to the urgent, febrile rhythms of Lonnie Donegan. Among enlightened couples, cheese fondue is all the rage.

All the old barriers have suddenly come down. I find to my alarm that even men of the very greatest distinction can't keep their hands to themselves. Last night, I had to fend off the then Chancellor of the Exchequer. I was interviewing him about the trade deficit on live tele-

vision for *New Year Late Night Love-In* when suddenly he cast aside his red box, pulled down his trousers and leapt on top of me.

As I struggled to retain hold of my clipboard, veteran broadcaster Cliff Michelmore attempted to rectify the situation. 'Let's move swiftly on to the balance of payments, Chancellor,' he said. 'Any hope of an upturn come the autumn?' But before the Chancellor had a chance to reply, the incoming governor of the Bank of England had barged into the studio, wearing nothing but a posing pouch. If this is how the Sixties begin, how on earth will they end?

JOAN BAKEWELL

January 2nd

Today I cook pasta. Pasta plain. But good. For those who come after, these directions I leave:

PASTA PLAIN – BUT GOOD

Ingredients:
Pasta.
And Salt.
And Water.
And Fire.

Directions:
Place the pasta in the water and the salt in the water and the water in the pot and the pot on the fire.

In the pot? The fire in the pot?
No. The water in the pot. The pot on the fire.
The pasta in the water?
Yes in the water.
And the salt in the fire?
No. The salt in the water.
And the water on the fire?

No. The water in the pot and the pot on the fire. Not the water on the fire. For then the fire will die and dying be dead. Nor will the water boil and the pasta will drain dry and not cooked and hard to the teeth.

The salt falls nor does it cease to fall.

The water boils. So be it.

Cease from placing your hand in the boiling water. Place your hand in the boiling water and it will cause you pain.

Much pain?

Very much pain.

In the pot the bubbles bubble up and bubble some more. The bubbles are bubbly. Never more bubbly bubbles bubbling bubbliest. And having bubbled the bubbles still bubbly.

Or bubblier?

Or bubblier.

Across the kitchen a board intended for chopping. Here. Take it. Chop.

What will I chop? There are no ingredients to chop.

Just chop. Don't cease from chopping. To chop is to become a man.

After ten minutes. The pasta stiff and dry and upright no more. The pasta lank and wet and soft. In the eternal damp of water.

Pour water free like some ancient anointing. The pasta left alone in the pot. Alone and naked.

The salt. Where's the salt?

The salt is gone. Lost to the water and gone forever.

I grieve for the salt.

It is the salt for which I grieve.

Tip the pasta out.

The pasta?

Yes. Tip it out. Onto.

A plate?

Yes. And stop.

Finishing your sentences?

Yes.

Why?

Because it is so.

Irritating?

Darling Debo,

Could you bear to cast your bejewell'd eye o'er this weary traveller's joyous twitterings?

Day 1. Yanina, 8 March. We arrive in Prevaza from Yanina with Konitsa and Kalpaki before venturing forth to Kalpaki with Prevaza and Yanina. Umbrous olives procrastinate pleadingly over the weary waters in the priest's leafy garden overlooking a forested valley along which a repining river flows flowingly. O'erhead flies a squawking convoy of stuffed courgettes, flapping fearlessly towards a destination undefined. Ah, the joy of skipping on the petulant pine-needles and the verdant grass underfoot! Gentians cluster in every fissure, and clusters fissure in every gentian. Blow the wind southerly, southerly, southerly! One nearly swoons away with the magic of the language as a sunbaked Sarakatsan muleteer, Christos Karvounis, cackles cautiously, recalling rough-hewn rambles with … <twenty pages cut for reasons of space>

… and when we wake up – joy upon joys! – we fulsomely find we have another thirty-nine delightful days to gorgeously go.

Bundles of love,

Paddy

PATRICK LEIGH-FERMOR, FROM A LETTER TO DEBORAH, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

January 3rd

Nothing in your memory anywhere of anything so good. Now the pasta is eaten. Disappeared. The pasta disappeared as everything disappears. As the comma disappears and the semi-colon disappears and the inverted comma disappears and the apostrophe disappears and the adjectives and the pronouns all disappear.

Leaving just full stops and And.

And And?

And And.

And And.

CORMAC McCARTHY

Darling Twat,

Can't wait to read your last scrumptious screed, possibly first thing next year, or, failing that, the year after, leisure permitting.

Greece – it was Greece, wasn't it? – sounds desperately Greek, which is just as it should be. One would hate to hear that it had turned all French.

P.S. Why does everyone insist on being so beastly about poor Dr Crippen? He may have been a mite offhand with his wife, but, my word, he was an excellent doctor with a perfectly lovely smile, a dear old friend of Mecca.*

In tearing haste,

Debo

DEBORAH, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE,
LETTER TO PATRICK LEIGH-FERMOR

January 4th

People have been kind enough to call me sharp. To be blunt, I am sharp. It was probably Rilke who first taught me that if ever a man is to be sharp, he needs also to be blunt. This was a revelation to me, partly because I already knew it. The sharp man must make pointed statements in rounded prose, remaining careful that the points emerge from his heart, and not from his head, or they will come out flat. Voltaire, too, taught me to square my feelings with my thoughts, particularly when talking among my circle.

CLIVE JAMES

*Mecca Mitford, Muslim fundamentalist.