

# HUNTED

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*'Family is the most important thing'*

*'Hugs can do great amounts of good - especially for children.'*

*'Carry out random acts of kindness with no expectatin of reward - safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you'*

*'I like to be a free spirit. Some don't like that, but that's the way I am'*

*'There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded'*

*'I knew what my job was; it was to go out and meet the poele and love them'*

*'The biggest disease in this day and age is that of people feeling unloved.'*

*'Anywhere I see suffering, that is where I want to be, doing what I can'*

*'I don't think very many people want me to be Queen, and by that I mean the establishment I'm married in to'*

-Diana

# 1 . Beginning of New

The boys were asleep by eight, a rarity for the high and arduous nighttime spirits of the floor three, Kensington. A Wednesday night like this is one that I ordinarily use to and set out a sports uniform for Harry's Thursday morning rugby fixture.

Although just as I made my way out of the boys' room I heard Williams' tired voice, 'Is mum coming to and tuck us in?' I reassured him that I'd see to his tucking in.

As per the norm, I made my way into her palatial study as Diana's employee, to inform her of the children being safely in bed and ready for her to say goodnight, but tonight my role changed to an old friend. She has needed this side of me more so and more so in the last few years.

The room gives away more about her than she intends it to. It's hidden away at the end of a grand corridor, almost like a secret cellar from the days of prohibition. I sometimes imagine being a lavish royal when I walk along there.

Positioned carefully over the fireplace are photos I've never had time to notice before. Harry and Will, grinning on holiday in Cumbria with their mother. In Diana's eyes, happiness looked simple. Harry is inhaling cake on his fourth birthday, holding a rugby cup in another.

Around the office are smaller pictures of Charles and Di, at parties and events.

I always felt these are displayed as a formality, a pretence. The image that was expected. Not that I would ever express that.

Diana acknowledged me, wiped her nose with a smile and perfected her already perfect hair.

I placed my hand around her shoulder. Her tears flowed from her eyes to her skin as waves meet the land. She turned and pressed her face into my blouse. It soaked through and was cold on my chest, helping me to understand her better. (deleted imagery)

"This is silly. Ludicrous, actually, it's what I've been longing for and all I can do is cry", she forced an uncomfortable laugh and held up a now less than pristine A4 envelope to show me, addressed to Princess Lady Diana.

I didn't know quite what I was looking at. I squeezed her a little tighter to mask my perplexity, took the envelope from her and frowned to myself.

She took my silence just as I had hoped. "The end to it all, it's happening".

My mind turned to Charles, the termination to the dejected marriage.

I have prepared for the inevitability of this situation but It seemed all the more simple to navigate in my head.

'I must count my blessings that it is at least amicable. I can't imagine it being a toxic divorce - especially with the boys' She took a deep breath and straightened her spine from leaning on me. I

took her hand, kissed it and led her to the room of her sleeping beauties. ‘You *must* count your blessings’.

Her steps to the bedroom were slow and heavy, exhausted but somehow with an air of bittersweet contentment. Diana leant on the doorway and let it take her weight as she admired her boys from afar. Took a deep breath, held it and breathed out. She closed her eyes and formed a smile.

## 2. Reality

Sunday is ordinarily my day off, I’m used to going to church on my own, visiting my mother for Sunday lunch and just doing little to nothing. Although today I stayed in Kensington, I’m glad that I did. It is strange being on floor three without worrying if the boys are hungry or need someone to play battleships with.

I’ve always cherished a morning like this, friend to friend with Diana.

We sat together after her morning shower.

As fragrant steam made its way under the bathroom door, I set out two saucers and china cups, placing two shortbread biscuits on the little saucers and naturally wiping the already clean surface of the kitchen top.

The dining room is elegant in a tastefully minimalist sort of way. Especially for a room belonging to members of the royal family. The table dominates the space. I’ve always been in awe of its grandeur but don’t often get to really appreciate it. It’s an elongated ellipse of oak with raw bark at the edges, smooth enough to be safe for the boys.

“I hope you’re getting ready, boys! Dad will be here in 50 minutes and it’s cold outside! Long Johns and wooly jumpers, William, will you help your brother please?”

Diana sped past the dining room doors and caught a glimpse of me sitting at the table and sprung back.

“Nice to have nothing to do with them for a change?” She giggled, a new sense of brightness beamed from her in every direction. “Give me 5 mins”, she bounded off.

I smiled and touched the teapot to check the heat, It would last 5 minutes.

When Diana and I sit and talk, it’s much more than words. It’s reminiscent, its smiles, often tears. Each intrigued and elevated by each other's stories. This time it began joyous.

“Your boys are undeniably lucky to live such a jovial and content life under the circumstances”, I remember saying. The corners of her lips raised slightly as she sipped her tea.

”Although might it be time to focus on finding your *own* happiness and peace, post divorce?”

I instantly regretted saying that. I ruined the moment. I could see her thoughts rapidly scanning across her mind.

“I knew one of our conversations would come to that”

Diana looked off far into the distance. Her eyes shifted away from the gaze of mine and they became glazed with a layer of tears. As she blinked, one fell from her eyes and slid down her cheek. She put her hand over her mouth tightly in an attempt to hide any sound that wanted to escape from her mouth.

I was quite shocked, I didn't mean to create any kind of upset in the slightest.

"I don't feel my needs should be the priority in the upbringing of William and Harry's life," she said finally catching my gaze. "I am the priority in theirs, and so I can't think about me and what I need, I can't afford to". She stared into my eyes, hoping I'd tell her I understood and agreed.

I said nothing, just shook my head - in a loving way.

"Not only did I not have the love and attention a child craves growing up, but neither did I have parents who cared about the lack of it, and it's innocence a child has that forms the idea that it's something that they did wrong, or it's normal to be pushed to the side. It's not!" her tone became increasingly tense and irate as she went.

No one sees Princess Diana with any form of rage behind her eyes, not often myself, but I know it's real when I do.

"I used to hide behind the curtains as my father would smack my mother across the face, I was almost made to feel the normality behind that. And this is why the love my children receive from me will be the most loving I am possibly able to muster, I have so much to give, I hope that I give it the right way. Well I hope that now I am able to"

I felt my heartbeat pound in my fingers and they went to support the trembling hands of hers.

"I feel so positive, so joyful about this next chapter but carry so much more than that and It has hung over my head like a dark cloud for the best part of my life."

It always shocks me seeing the peoples princess any less than pristine and smiling. Happy and inspiring.

### 3. Uncover

I can't quite believe the conversation I had with Di this evening. It uncovered things I feel awful for never seeing, maybe even overlooking? We were folding Williams and Harry's uniforms, she's always been involved like that. Everything in the room is blue brown and green, a woodland mural painted on the back wall by someone who knows what they were doing. The room is furnished with no clear sense of budget. Diana sat on Harry's bed and began fiddling with his nightgown on the end of his bed, with no seeming objective to fold it.

The boys were both out swimming this evening.

After tidying the boy's room, we reclined on opposite sofas in the viewing room.

"My operating system is very different to everyone else's," she said mid way through a conversation about Leo McCarey's film "An Affair to Remember".

"I feel I have always used deep and painful silence as a way to deal with my pain."

I was aware of this from our conversations about Diana's childhood, but questioned what brought up such emotions.

Not sensing the severity of her feelings and what this conversation would initiate, I said "Ironic that really, with you being the most known about women in the western world". She sharply raised an eyebrow and inhaled deeply and exhaled sharply, crossing her arms across her chest.

A few moments of silence passed.

"As it may seem." she replied exhaling from her nose with more force than normal, resembling a sign of amusement.

We left it there.

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Time hit 10pm and I was getting ready to leave for one of my nights home, whilst Diana helped me find my coat (the boys like to hide it on Wednesdays evenings because they know I go home - I don't mind) when she enquired about my quite tragically failed marriage. "Did you ever feel like a second choice? Or like you weren't the prize but the formality, what seemed right at the time." She said almost sheepishly, as if afraid to ponder such a thing.

I went on to discover as she uncovered the heartbreak and sorrow of her marriage.

"Our honeymoon was never as I envisioned a honeymoon to be."

She took me back to where it happened, I wish I was able to take the power from the pain.

"I leave the memory of the honeymoon and Camila and Charles to gather dust. I began to do so from the moment I saw the cufflinks she got him, the letters she had so lovingly hand written for his holiday away. I recall how my body jarred with each violent blow, how the pain seared and burnt through to my bone, completely ripping any sense of new found security I may have felt, or should have felt".

She had bent her body over during the course of telling me this, as if having been kicked in the stomach repeatedly.

‘There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded’

This was hard for me to hear or comprehend, I was kicking myself for not asking about this before, it had stared at me and the whole world right in the eyes and no one tried to help the young princess who could ‘handle anything’.

I haven’t slept tonight, It’s 3:48am as I write this and I am still trying to imagine Diana’s unimaginable pain

## 4. Hunted

My grief today came in sharp waves. Perpetual, white fringed waves. Pain was my master today and every time it came, it threatened to consume me. I know it will and I’m playing the worst of waiting games. Today It almost pulled me under and held me there. Pain was not only my master today, it was nations’ master too but most importantly the boys’ master.

I cannot explain the way my heart is sodden with sorrow today, and I cannot help but let outrage burst through my veins at all of those who played a part in making this happen.

Today I watched back and interview to see Di’s face, hear her voice. I skipped to the part that I know word for word, “I don’t think many people would want me to be Queen and by that I mean the establishment I am married in to”.

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Today was robotic, I am so hollow, my eyes heavy, my head hung from the minute I was woken up by the news.

Kensington floor three is filled with cruel cries and dissonant silence.

I took the boys to their fathers home. Let them be with the family Diana would’ve possibly trusted.

They left my shirt sodden, just as their mother would do sometimes.

I sit here with my mind on a goose chase. I want to tie everything together and make a case for my piece of mind. But peace is the last thing that would bring.

I am scared this will make me turn on everyone I see.

Diana was outcast from families. New and old. She was In and out of depression, I remember all our conversations when she was in the dark. I told her she’d make it out. Even promised.

The hounding from persistive flies snapping and flashing the happiness out from her life.

She knew where she wasn’t wanted and *that* family was one. Her new found life was ‘unapologetically insolent’, I heard one say. A ‘snarmy individual who hugs too much’, said another.

It all seems to boil down to the fact that she loved so hard! Lived so carefree but cared more than anything about things that mattered. Didn’t just help, but made every effort.

When she loved she ran with it freely, like a gazelle lit by the warmth of a sunset sky.

Hunted. Shot down until she lay there helpless.