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The Crown Final Season: Exit Diana



The Crown Season 6 is in full swing, and how I remember the late summer of 1997 and the crazy heady week of uncharacteristically (for Brits) shows of grieving and mourning throughout the UK. But particular in London.

How strange it was to witness what seemed to resemble scenes of mass hysteria; grieving a woman you never met. And yet there was something about her. Whether she was comforting AIDS patients, out-dressing her rivals (easy!) or comforting land mines victims, she had that unusual natural grooming and poise of the glitterati and she had it in spades.

I'd spent July in Hamburg, Germany, and rather than return immediately to London, I flew to Edinburgh for the wedding of a university friend. My Gastvater had already teased me about whether I was jealous of Diana's relationship with Dodi.

Apparently he (Dodi not Herr Jung) and Diana flew his helicopter into her psychic's back garden in north London (Diana needed spiritual reassurance). It was a quick break from sunning themselves on the Med.

I remember a young girl who lived next door to the psychic was extremely forthcoming about her assessment of Dodi for the press - "he's short and fat and his hair's awful".

Di 'n' Dodi

Everyone at the wedding was chatting about Di 'n' Dodi. Everyone in the world was chatting about Di 'n' Dodi. This included Dodi's American "fiancée" (huh? Who she?) who leapt, hell hath no fury-like, on to a plane to Europe. It was all deliciously fabulous.

As a good hardy wedding socialite, I lasted the distance until the small hours. Then, a sturdy looking bearded portly Scotsman in a kilt and frilled shirt suddenly marched into the bar.

He dramatically switched off the music, and announced in booming tones that "there is news from Paris. Dodi is dead. He admitted he was unsure about Diana's condition.

The next morning the breakfast room had turned into a news station and pretty quickly became a zombie wasteland. "Not Diana, it's just not believable". My friend, the bride, had her nose put significantly out of joint when it was a question of conversation.

What was more shocking was the atmosphere in London. Thousands upon thousands of people were milling, even shuffling with bewilderment around Buckingham and Kensington palaces, laying countless wreaths of shop-bought flowers, which became mountainous.

The Queen

And after a week, the scent of the flowers became acrid and unpleasant, but nobody wanted to get rid of them. The Queen bore the brunt of the anger people resort to expressing when there is a bad death. She was considered callous and unfeeling and was practically considered to have had a gun at her back when she finally made a speech.

Obviously, we had to have a dinner party to comment on events.

Our friend Patricia reported that she had spent overnight at a stately home in the countryside. She had got up with a hangover, and when someone reported the news to her at breakfast, her reaction was, "oh God, not another dead blonde". It did not go down well. "You think you were treated badly!" shrieked Bidy.

"The Queen Mother's Gates at Buckingham Palace are going to be renamed! They're taking them away from the poor old dear. It's a bloody disgrace.

They're already talking about renaming Heathrow "Diana". "Are you serious?" I shouted. "That's not on. We should protest". "You're right!" snapped Bidy's partner Charles and a verbal jousting ensued as they fed off their mutual indignation.

They're going to call them "Diana Dors".

Snookered is I believe the expression that ended on my face.

So that happened 26 years ago. Probably not what anyone expected but seems to have panned out ok for most of the family. Poor Di - mother nature was generous towards her in terms of glamour and likeability, but monarchy was maybe not within her.