



PRINCE HARRY

SPARE

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Prince Harry wishes to support British charities with donations from his
proceeds from SPARE. The Duke of Sussex has donated \$1,500,000 to
Sentebale, an organization he founded with Prince Seeiso in their mothers'
legacies, which supports vulnerable children and young people in Lesotho and
Botswana affected by HIV/AIDS. Prince Harry will also donate to the nonprofit
organization WellChild in the amount of £300,000. WellChild, which he has
been Royal patron of for fifteen years, makes it possible for children and young
people with complex health needs to be cared for at home instead of hospital,
wherever possible.

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The past is never dead. It's not even past.

—WILLIAM FAULKNER

WE AGREED TO MEET a few hours after the funeral. In the Frogmore gardens, by the old Gothic ruin. I got there first.

I looked around, saw no one.

I checked my phone. No texts, no voicemails.

They must be running late, I thought, leaning against the stone wall.

I put away my phone and told myself: Stay calm.

The weather was quintessentially April. Not quite winter, not yet spring. The trees were bare, but the air was soft. The sky was gray, but the tulips were popping. The light was pale, but the indigo lake, threading through the gardens, glowed.

How beautiful it all is, I thought. And also how sad.

Once upon a time, this was going to be my forever home. Instead it had proved to be just another brief stop.

When my wife and I fled this place, in fear for our sanity and physical safety, I wasn't sure when I'd ever come back. That was January 2020. Now, fifteen months later, here I was, days after waking to thirty-two missed calls and then one short, heart-racing talk with Granny: *Harry... Grandpa's gone.*

The wind picked up, turned colder. I hunched my shoulders, rubbed my arms, regretted the thinness of my white shirt. I wished I'd not changed out of my funeral suit. I wished I'd thought to bring a coat. I turned my back to the wind and saw, looming behind me, the Gothic ruin, which in reality was no more Gothic than the Millennium Wheel. Some clever architect, some bit of stagecraft. Like so much around here, I thought.

I moved from the stone wall to a small wooden bench. Sitting, I checked my phone again, peered up and down the garden path.

Where are they?

Another gust of wind. Funny, it reminded me of Grandpa. His wintry demeanor, maybe. Or his icy sense of humor. I recalled one particular shooting weekend years ago. A mate, just trying to make conversation,

asked Grandpa what he thought of my new beard, which had been causing concern in the family and controversy in the press. *Should the Queen Force Prince Harry to Shave?* Grandpa looked at my mate, looked at my chin, broke into a devilish grin. *THAT'S no beard!*

Everyone laughed. To beard or not to beard, that was the question, but leave it to Grandpa to demand *more* beard. *Let grow the luxurious bristles of a bloody Viking!*

I thought of Grandpa's strong opinions, his many passions—carriage driving, barbecuing, shooting, food, beer. The way he embraced *life*. He had that in common with my mother. Maybe that was why he'd been such a fan. Long before she was Princess Diana, back when she was simply Diana Spencer, kindergarten teacher, secret girlfriend of Prince Charles, my grandfather was her loudest advocate. Some said he actually brokered my parents' marriage. If so, an argument could be made that Grandpa was the Prime Cause in my world. But for him, I wouldn't be here.

Neither would my older brother.

Then again, maybe our mother *would* be here. If she hadn't married Pa...

I recalled one recent chat, just me and Grandpa, not long after he'd turned ninety-seven. He was thinking about the end. He was no longer capable of pursuing his passions, he said. And yet the thing he missed most was work. Without work, he said, everything crumbles. He didn't seem sad, just ready. *You have to know when it's time to go, Harry.*

I glanced now into the distance, towards the mini skyline of crypts and monuments alongside Frogmore. The Royal Burial Ground. Final resting place for so many of us, including Queen Victoria. Also, the notorious Wallis Simpson. Also, her doubly notorious husband Edward, the former King and my great-great-uncle. After Edward gave up his throne for Wallis, after they fled Britain, both of them fretted about their ultimate return—both obsessed about being buried right here. The Queen, my grandmother, granted their plea. But she placed them at a distance from everyone else, beneath a stooped plane tree. One last finger wag, perhaps. One final exile, maybe. I wondered how Wallis and Edward felt now about all their fretting. Did any of it matter in the end? I wondered if they wondered at all. Were

they floating in some airy realm, still mulling their choices, or were they Nowhere, thinking Nothing? Could there really be Nothing after this? Does consciousness, like time, have a stop? Or maybe, I thought, just maybe, they're here right now, next to the fake Gothic ruin, or next to me, eavesdropping on my thoughts. And if so...*maybe my mother is too?*

The thought of her, as always, gave me a jolt of hope, and a burst of energy.

And a stab of sorrow.

I missed my mother every day, but that day, on the verge of that nerve-racking rendezvous at Frogmore, I found myself longing for her, and I couldn't say just why. Like so much about her, it was hard to put into words.

Although my mother was a princess, named after a goddess, both those terms always felt weak, inadequate. People routinely compared her to icons and saints, from Nelson Mandela to Mother Teresa to Joan of Arc, but every such comparison, while lofty and loving, also felt wide of the mark. The most recognizable woman on the planet, one of the most beloved, my mother was simply indescribable, that was the plain truth. And yet...how could someone so far beyond everyday language remain so real, so palpably present, so exquisitely vivid in my mind? How was it possible that I could see her, clear as the swan skimming towards me on that indigo lake? How could I hear her laughter, loud as the songbirds in the bare trees—still? There was so much I didn't remember, because I was so young when she died, but the greater miracle was all that I did. Her devastating smile, her vulnerable eyes, her childlike love of movies and music and clothes and sweets—and us. Oh how she loved my brother and me. *Obsessively*, she once confessed to an interviewer.

Well, Mummy...vice versa.

Maybe she was omnipresent for the very same reason that she was indescribable—because she was light, pure and radiant light, and how can you really describe light? Even Einstein struggled with that one. Recently, astronomers rearranged their biggest telescopes, aimed them at one tiny crevice in the cosmos, and managed to catch a glimpse of one breathtaking

sphere, which they named Earendel, the Old English word for Morning Star. Billions of miles off, and probably long vanished, Earendel is closer to the Big Bang, the moment of Creation, than our own Milky Way, and yet it's somehow still visible to mortal eyes because it's just so awesomely bright and dazzling.

That was my mother.

That was why I could see her, sense her, always, but especially that April afternoon at Frogmore.

That—and the fact that I was carrying her flag. I'd come to those gardens because I wanted peace. I wanted it more than anything. I wanted it for my family's sake, and for my own—but also for hers.

People forget how much my mother strove for peace. She circled the globe many times over, traipsed through minefields, cuddled AIDS patients, consoled war orphans, always working to bring peace to someone somewhere, and I knew how desperately she would want—no, *did* want—peace between her boys, and between us two and Pa. And among the whole family.

For months the Windsors had been at war. There had been strife in our ranks, off and on, going back centuries, but this was different. This was a full-scale public rupture, and it threatened to become irreparable. So, though I'd flown home specifically and solely for Grandpa's funeral, while there I'd asked for this secret meeting with my older brother, Willy, and my father to talk about the state of things.

To find a way out.

But now I looked once more at my phone and once more up and down the garden path and I thought: Maybe they've changed their minds. Maybe they're not going to come.

For half a second I considered giving up, going for a walk through the gardens by myself or heading back to the house where all my cousins were drinking and sharing stories of Grandpa.

Then, at last, I saw them. Shoulder to shoulder, striding towards me, they looked grim, almost menacing. More, they looked tightly aligned. My

stomach dropped. Normally they'd be squabbling about one thing or another, but now they appeared to be in lockstep—in league.

The thought occurred: Hang on, are we meeting for a walk...or a duel?

I rose from the wooden bench, made a tentative step towards them, gave a weak smile. They didn't smile back. Now my heart really started thrashing in my chest. Deep breaths, I told myself.

Apart from fear, I was feeling a kind of hyper-awareness, and a hugely intense vulnerability, which I'd experienced at other key moments of my life.

Walking behind my mother's coffin.

Going into battle for the first time.

Giving a speech in the middle of a panic attack.

There was that same sense of embarking on a quest, and not knowing if I was up to it, while also fully knowing that there was no turning back. That Fate was in the saddle.

OK, Mummy, I thought, picking up the pace, here goes. Wish me luck.

We met in the middle of the path. *Willy? Pa? Hello.*

Harold.

Painfully tepid.

We wheeled, formed a line, set off along the gravel path over the little ivy-covered stone bridge.

The way we simply fell into this synchronous alignment, the way we wordlessly assumed the same measured paces and bowed heads, plus the nearness of those graves—how could anyone not be reminded of Mummy's funeral? I told myself not to think about that, to think instead about the pleasing crunch of our footsteps, and the way our words flew away like wisps of smoke on the wind.

Being British, being Windsors, we began chatting casually about the weather. We compared notes about Grandpa's funeral. He'd planned it all himself, down to the tiniest detail, we reminded each other with rueful smiles.

Small talk. The smallest. We touched on all secondary subjects and I kept waiting for us to get to the primary one, wondering why it was taking

so long and also how on earth my father and brother could appear so calm.

I looked around. We'd covered a fair bit of terrain, and were now smack in the middle of the Royal Burial Ground, more up to our ankles in bodies than Prince Hamlet. Come to think of it...didn't I myself once ask to be buried here? Hours before I'd gone off to war my private secretary said I needed to choose the spot where my remains should be interred. *Should the worst happen, Your Royal Highness...war being an uncertain thing...*

There were several options. St. George's Chapel? The Royal Vault at Windsor, where Grandpa was being settled at this moment?

No, I'd chosen this one, because the gardens were lovely, and because it seemed peaceful.

Our feet almost on top of Wallis Simpson's face, Pa launched into a micro-lecture about this personage over here, that royal cousin over there, all the once-eminent dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, currently residing beneath the lawn. A lifelong student of history, he had loads of information to share, and part of me thought we might be there for hours, and that there might be a test at the end. Mercifully, he stopped, and we carried on along the grass around the edge of the lake, arriving at a beautiful little patch of daffodils.

It was there, at last, that we got down to business.

I tried to explain my side of things. I wasn't at my best. For starters, I was still nervous, fighting to keep my emotions in check, while also striving to be succinct and precise. More, I'd vowed not to let this encounter devolve into another argument. But I quickly discovered that it wasn't up to me. Pa and Willy had their parts to play, and they'd come ready for a fight. Every time I ventured a new explanation, started a new line of thought, one or both of them would cut me off. Willy in particular didn't want to hear anything. After he'd shut me down several times, he and I began sniping, saying some of the same things we'd said for months—years. It got so heated that Pa raised his hands. *Enough!*

He stood between us, looking up at our flushed faces: *Please, boys—don't make my final years a misery.*

His voice sounded raspy, fragile. It sounded, if I'm being honest, old.

I thought about Grandpa.

All at once something shifted inside of me. I looked at Willy, really looked at him, maybe for the first time since we were boys. I took it all in: his familiar scowl, which had always been his default in dealings with me; his alarming baldness, more advanced than my own; his famous resemblance to Mummy, which was fading with time. With age. In some ways he was my mirror, in some ways he was my opposite. My beloved brother, my arch nemesis, how had that happened?

I felt massively tired. I wanted to go home, and I realized what a complicated concept home had become. Or maybe always was. I gestured at the gardens, the city beyond, the nation, and said: *Willy, this was supposed to be our home. We were going to live here the rest of our lives.*

You left, Harold.

Yeah—and you know why.

I don't.

You...don't?

I honestly don't.

I leaned back. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was one thing to disagree about who was at fault or how things might have been different, but for him to claim total ignorance of the reasons I'd fled the land of my birth—the land for which I'd fought and been ready to die—my Mother Country? That fraught phrase. To claim no knowledge of why my wife and I took the drastic step of picking up our child and just running like hell, leaving behind everything—house, friends, furniture? Really?

I looked up at the trees: *You don't know!*

Harold...I honestly don't.

I turned to Pa. He was gazing at me with an expression that said: *Neither do I.*

Wow, I thought. Maybe they really don't.

Staggering. But maybe it was true.

And if they didn't know why I'd left, maybe they just didn't know me. At all.

And maybe they never really did.

And to be fair, maybe I didn't either.

The thought made me feel colder, and terribly alone.

But it also fired me up. I thought: *I have to tell them.*

How can I tell them?

I can't. It would take too long.

Besides, they're clearly not in the right frame of mind to listen.

Not now, anyway. Not today.

And so:

Pa? Willy?

World?

Here you go.