

CHAPTER 9



Diana Snares Her Man

“**W**HATEVER ‘IN LOVE’ means.” It was Charles’s awkward reply to a seemingly simple question posed by a television interviewer following the announcement of the prince’s engagement to Lady Diana Spencer on February 24, 1981. After Charles said he was “just delighted and happy,” the interviewer had asked, “And I suppose in love?” Diana instantly replied, “Of course,” with a grimace and an eye roll. When the prince offered his four-word qualification, she fell in line. “Yes,” she giggled.

“Put your own interpretation on it,” added Charles after a beat. Reviewing the wreckage of his marriage a decade later, his critics in the press were only too happy to oblige. They saw a cynical lack of commitment to his fiancée from the start, and they frequently misquoted Charles as saying, “Whatever ‘love’ means.”

Set against his tortured ruminations on the meaning of love and marriage over the years, he was being honest, in his bumbling way, about his uncertainty. His friends knew he had not fallen in love, but that Diana fit Dickie’s ideal vision of a “sweet charactered girl” lacking a romantic past. In the TV interview, Charles said he was “amazed” that she was “brave enough to take me on.” Charles

thought he could grow to love Diana, just as the arranged marriage of his grandmother and King George VI later grew into love.

The prince had already given notice that he wouldn't let his heart rule his head in such a momentous decision. But he had been ruled by neither. Pressured and panicked, he had rushed into a decision before he was ready, understanding little about the rosy-cheeked girl of nineteen who gave him beguiling sidelong glances. At age thirty-two, he should have known better. "How could I have got it all so wrong?" he wrote six years later in an anguished letter to a friend.

HOW INDEED? ON paper, Diana seemed perfect, if worryingly young: tender with children; sporty and enthusiastic; sensitive, informal, and open, with an apparent love of the countryside and its pursuits. The Spencers were one of England's oldest families, members of the Whig aristocracy that drove the Glorious Revolution of 1688, removing pro-Catholic James II from the throne and ensuring that George of Hanover in Germany, a Protestant descended from King James I, became King George I. The Spencer bloodlines were entwined with the royal family's.

Diana had lived in Norfolk near Sandringham until the age of fourteen, when her father inherited the earldom in 1975 and the thirteen-thousand-acre Althorp estate with its sixteenth-century 121-room house filled with paintings by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Van Dyck that could rival even the royal family's collection. Although she was away at boarding school, the move was traumatic for Diana—yet another wrench in a tumultuous childhood. She was the third of four children, with two older sisters, Sarah and Jane, and Charles, a brother three years younger. The family was fractured in the autumn of 1967 when their mother, Frances, left home to join her lover, Peter Shand Kydd, in London.

The Spencer divorce was rancorous. Diana and her younger brother, who witnessed the tears and temper firsthand, suffered the most damage, while Sarah and Jane were safely at boarding school. The courtroom battle dragged out allegations of Johnnie Spencer's cruelty and Frances's adultery. Diana was seven when Johnnie was

granted the divorce and, unusually, custody of his four children. Frances's own mother, Ruth, Lady Fermoy, had testified against her in court, along with other character witnesses who attested to Johnnie's fitness as a father and Frances's deficiencies as a mother. The following month, May 1969, Frances remarried. Johnnie sank into depression.

When Diana turned nine, she went to the first of her two boarding schools. She was such a mediocre student that she had the dubious distinction of twice failing all five of her O-level exams to measure how much she had learned at age sixteen. She dropped out to attend a finishing school near Gstaad in Switzerland.

After six unhappy weeks abroad, she begged her parents to let her return to England and move into her mother's house in London. She knocked around for the next year, taking a cooking class and serving as an apprentice at a ballet school until she landed a job in the autumn of 1979 as a kindergarten assistant and part-time nanny for an American family.

She was "pure state-of-the-art Sloane," said Peter York, an anthropologist who coined the term *Sloane Ranger* to describe the kind of young woman who shopped and socialized around London's Sloane Square. But her crowd from Norfolk and boarding school, unlike Camilla's a decade earlier, avoided smoking and drinking and the fast life. They formed an enclave of relative innocence where Diana could find reassurance and good cheer. Not exactly the "Shy Di" of legend—the reporters who later covered her found her to be anything but—she nevertheless lacked confidence and often felt insecure.

At five foot ten, she lowered her head to be less conspicuous, and she wore unstylish clothing more suited to a schoolgirl. She was doe-eyed, lovely, and curvy, but she had no real boyfriends. Years later she would say she thought the boys in her set "were all trouble. . . . I couldn't handle it emotionally."

AS DIANA WAS settling in at the Young England kindergarten, Charles was feeling the aftershocks of Dickie Mountbatten's death. Camilla was there to console him, and more at liberty to do so when

Andrew was posted to Rhodesia as the senior military liaison officer to Christopher Soames, the British Governor. During his tour there, word drifted back to London that Andrew was reportedly involved with Soames's daughter Charlotte, a sister of Charles's close friend Nicholas—yet another permutation of Britain's upper-class Venn diagram of infidelity.

Since Charles's first encounter with Diana at Althorp in November 1977, they had crossed paths on several occasions. Diana even came to Sandringham for a shooting party in February 1980, accompanied by Amanda Knatchbull: a promising start, but the twin forces of duty and pleasure-seeking kept Charles occupied for the next two months.

In mid-April, Charles was off to Africa to represent the Queen in the transfer of power from the British colony of Rhodesia to the newly elected government headed by Robert Mugabe. He was accompanied at the independence celebration in the renamed country of Zimbabwe by Lord Soames and Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Parker Bowles.

Camilla attended the historic ceremony with her husband, but she had traveled to Africa with her royal lover. During a dinner in Government House on the first night, she and Charles were reported to be flirting so openly that a dismayed Edward Adeane, the prince's private secretary, left the room. There was no doubt that Charles still felt a powerful gravitational pull toward Camilla.

The expectations for Charles to settle down with a suitable wife were rising even as his options were narrowing. In early May he joined a group including Diana at the Royal Albert Hall for Verdi's *Requiem*. While Charles had no "apparent surge in feeling" for her, he had begun "to think seriously of her as a potential bride."

At age thirty-one, he was facing the fact that every woman suitable in terms of pedigree, age, sophistication, worldliness, and intelligence was either married or had long since lost her virginity. In 1980—more than a decade after the sexual revolution had started—he was hemmed in by the royal custom of marrying a virgin, or at least a woman who *seemed* virginal. He was forced, in effect, to rob the cradle.

The twelve-year age gap between Charles and Diana was essentially unbridgeable. He had been through the ups and downs of the formative years of early adulthood, pushing to find a role for himself and channel his passions into action, while Diana was still an adolescent. They had no intellectual connections, few mutual friends, no interests in common, and none of the shared life experiences he would have with a contemporary. Although Camilla had the same limited upper-class education, she was on Charles's wavelength—absorbed as he was by hunting and other country pursuits, at home in the same social circle—in a way that Diana could never be.

Diana came sharply into focus during a Sussex house party weekend in July 1980. The host's son was part of Diana's London crowd, and he had invited her to watch polo at nearby Cowdray Park, where Prince Charles's team was playing. After the polo, during a barbecue, Charles and Diana had their first extended conversation. When they spoke of Mountbatten's murder and funeral, Charles was touched at Diana's observation that he was lonely and needed some care. Another houseguest, Charles's ex-girlfriend Sabrina Guinness, took a more jaundiced view. "She was giggling," said Sabrina, "looking up at him . . . furiously trying to make an impression."

Within days, Diana had decamped to a cottage at Balmoral with her sister Jane, now married to a Norfolk neighbor, Robert Fellowes, an assistant private secretary to the Queen. Jane had recently given birth to their first child, and Diana was on hand to help with the newborn. Charles, who was staying with his parents, took the opportunity to spend time with her. "The romance didn't start, in my opinion, until she went up there," said Diana's cousin Robert Spencer. "She had visited me earlier in the summer, and she said nothing at all about Prince Charles."

Charles invited Diana to join him aboard the *Britannia* for the annual Cowes regatta in early August. His ever-vigilant valet, Stephen Barry, watched as Diana "went after the prince with single-minded determination. She wanted him and she got him." Charles astonished one of his closest friends by confiding that he had met the girl he wanted to marry. As the Queen's longtime adviser Martin

Charteris observed, Diana “understood that few men can resist a pretty girl who openly adores them.”

The romance broke into the open when the Queen asked Diana to Balmoral in early September during the weekend of the Braemar Gathering, where they sat in the royal box to watch tug-of-war contests and tartan-clad dancers. The Palmer-Tomkinsons and Parker Bowleses were there as well, to offer their appraisal and, Charles hoped, their approval.

Diana impressed family and friends with her enthusiasm for life in the Highlands. When they went deer stalking on the hills, Diana “got covered in mud, laughed her head off” in a rainstorm, Patty Palmer-Tomkinson recalled. Diana seemed to be “game for anything.” To one of his friends, Charles said that he “did not love her yet,” but she was “lovable and warm-hearted.” He was “sure he could fall in love with her.”

The tabloid press made up its mind unequivocally, once they spotted Diana in the royal mix at the Highland games and through their binoculars from a perch across the River Dee from the castle at Balmoral. “HE’S IN LOVE AGAIN! LADY DI IS THE NEW GIRL FOR CHARLES” pronounced *The Sun* in a page-one scoop.

With that, the hacks were off, in frantic pursuit of Diana, staking her out at work and at home, following her car, and tracking her every move. The *Daily Mail* reported (accurately) that the prince’s selection of Diana had been approved by the two women “who influence Charles most on personal matters, Lady Tryon and Camilla Parker Bowles.”

Charles and Diana made the rounds that fall—to Broadlands with the Mountbatten clan, to Birkhall for a nod from the Queen Mother, and to Bolehyde Manor, for two weekends with Camilla and Andrew. During the first of those, Charles took Diana on a tour of his new 348-acre Gloucestershire estate, Highgrove. The property included two nearby parcels of farmland (later enlarged to more than a thousand acres) that Charles could use for his agricultural laboratory.

The Duchy of Cornwall had bought Highgrove for Charles in

June 1980 for \$1,140,000 with the encouragement of Camilla. Highgrove was familiar to members of the Beaufort, who often rode through its parkland. Charles was entranced by a towering two-hundred-year-old cedar tree behind the house, by the overgrown and ramshackle brick walled garden, and the eighteenth-century stables.

The three-story Georgian house with a gray stone facade had four reception rooms and six bedrooms, excluding staff quarters. Built in the 1790s for a merchant, Highgrove was more modest than other royal residences, but Charles was most impressed by the “quality of light that flooded in through the hall windows.” This would be the “home of his own,” just fifteen minutes away from Camilla, a place where he could invent his first garden as the “outward expression of my inner self.”

When Charles showed Highgrove to Diana four months later, renovations were already under way. The prince disconcerted his new girlfriend by presumptuously asking her to help him with the interior decoration. Diana obligingly referred him to Dudley Poplak, a South African-born London designer friendly with her mother. Poplak’s bona fides as a trusted adviser to the Annenbergs on their renovation of Winfield House as well as a string of aristocratic English clients satisfied Charles that the job would be done to the highest standards.

The flashbulbs captured Diana again as she was leaving Princess Margaret’s fiftieth birthday party at the Ritz after midnight on November 4. She had been Charles’s guest but had made a solo exit. During the following couple of days, Charles was in Wiltshire on Duchy of Cornwall business—a fateful trip, as it turned out. Diana was next spotted in his company at Sandringham for his thirty-second birthday on November 14. The scrum of hacks and photographers outside the estate prevented her from going outdoors, which made her “very depressed.”

The marital calculus took an ugly turn with the publication of an explosive story in the *Sunday Mirror* on November 16, 1980. The report alleged that while he was on the Royal Train—the fam-

ily's private conveyance since the mid-nineteenth century—on November 5 and 6, Charles had spent two nights with Diana. The sexual implication was clear enough in the page one headline: "Royal Love Train."

Buckingham Palace hit back hard, insisting that the prince's only guests had been three officials from the Duchy. "As a rule the Palace tries to keep a lid on things, but when they went to bat and said something was a lie, it had to be very reliable," recalled Jonathan Dimpleby. Valet Stephen Barry, who was with his boss, along with two protection officers, was just as emphatic: "There was no lady on the train, not Lady Diana nor anyone else."

The notion of a clandestine rendezvous under those circumstances seemed improbable, but the tabloid stood by its story. Thirteen years later, James Whitaker of *The Mirror* contradicted the original two reporters by declaring that Camilla had been the woman on the train—an allegation she emphatically denied.

In November 1980, however unlikely the tale might have been, the honor of a nineteen-year-old girl had been impugned. Besieged by the press at every turn, Diana told a neighbor who worked for the *Daily Mail* that she was "miserable." It was a moment when she needed the full support of the man who was courting her, but on November 24, the day Diana made her unhappiness known in the pages of a London tabloid, Charles kept to his schedule and left for a long-planned tour of India and Nepal.

Others sprang to her defense. Her mother wrote an indignant letter about press fabrications to *The Times*. Members of Parliament denounced the "hounding" of Diana, and the Press Council summoned Fleet Street editors to a meeting for the first time in its twenty-seven-year history.

On November 29, Charles visited the Taj Mahal, built in 1631 by a Mughal emperor to signify eternal love for his wife. The prince vowed to return one day with his own wife. Diana, meanwhile, was facing down the press pack in London. She forcefully denied the "Royal Love Train" story, saying that she had stayed home with her roommates (who corroborated her account) and retired early after her late night at the Ritz party. When asked if she had heard from

Prince Charles, she said, "He has only gone for three weeks and he has just left, give him a chance."

Charles surfaced on New Year's Day at Sandringham with a sardonic message for the hacks: "I should like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy new year and your editors a particularly nasty one." Traveling incognito by train from London, Diana arrived on January 14 for a three-day visit.

It was a tense month all around. The Queen was angry that journalists were trailing the royal shooting parties around Norfolk. Most consequentially, Prince Philip weighed in with a letter in which he told his son that Diana's reputation was on the line because of all the speculation in the press. Charles should either propose to her or release her. In either event, he should make a decision shortly.

Perhaps Charles could have understood the nuances of his father's message more clearly if he and Philip had talked it through. But written communications were the regrettable norm for father and son. Charles chose to interpret the letter as coercive and accusatory. Pamela Hicks, who read it, said it was "measured and sensitive. Charles read it as 'You've got to get engaged.' He wasn't in love, he wasn't ready. He saw it as a ghastly threat. Psychologically he assumed his father bullied him, so he read it as a bullying letter."

Jonathan Dimpleby, the authorized biographer, believed that Charles "was driven by obligation." The prince lamented that he had never had a meaningful relationship with any of his girlfriends. He worried "desperately" about what Diana "was going into" and felt that he "would be letting everyone down if he didn't marry her."

As Charles dithered, three of his friends voiced their misgivings about a match with Diana. Penny Romsey, the wife of Dickie Mountbatten's grandson Norton, cautioned Charles that he and Diana had little in common. Penny questioned whether Diana's feelings for the prince were genuine. Diana appeared to be "auditioning for a central role in a costume drama," she said. When Penny's husband, also close to Charles, seconded her concerns, the prince exploded in anger.

Nicholas Soames, who saw the prince frequently at weekend

shoots and social occasions, felt emboldened to offer his own warning to Charles that he and Diana were “too unlike.” According to a close friend of Soames, “Nick thought Diana wasn’t up to Charles’s weight, to use a riding expression. She was pretty childish and unformed.” Soames was so annoyed by the Duke of Edinburgh’s intervention that he braced his private secretary at a dinner party, telling him that Philip shouldn’t be “imposing such a terrible mismatch on his son.”

Charles couldn’t bring himself to speak to his parents about such a personal matter, nor did he have the vital link of Uncle Dickie. “If Mountbatten had been alive, he wouldn’t have let Charles marry Diana,” said the prince’s aide Michael Colborne. “He knew what was required of the future Queen.”

Mountbatten could have made the most compelling and logical argument of all: Since the summer of 1980, Charles and Diana had been together just a dozen times, with few private moments. They had only begun to take each other’s measure, and Charles relied on surface impressions. He knew nothing of Diana’s history of emotional problems dating from her turbulent childhood.

The one person who could have enlightened Charles kept quiet. Diana’s maternal grandmother, Ruth Fermoy, an intimate friend and lady-in-waiting to the Queen Mother, “thought Diana was unsuitable, and that she was an unreliable girl,” recalled Dimbleby, who spoke to Ruth shortly before her death in 1993. She told Dimbleby that if she had warned Charles, “he probably wouldn’t have paid the slightest attention because he was being driven.”

Charles went to Klosters in late January to ski with the Palmer-Tomkinsons. He confided his angst about proposing to Diana, and they tried to stiffen his backbone. In a letter to a friend in England, Charles described his “confused and anxious state of mind” about “taking a plunge into some rather unknown circumstances.” He said he wanted to “do the right thing for this Country and for my family,” but he was “terrified sometimes of making a promise and then perhaps living to regret it.” Despite his doubts and scant knowledge of Diana, he made the leap to a proposal.

Bound by duty when he should have been lifted by love, Charles invited Diana to Windsor Castle on Friday, February 6, 1981, three days after his return from Klosters. He asked for her hand, and she said yes, in a gale of giggles. Charles knew she was leaving shortly for a trip to Australia, so he was intending to give her that time to consider her decision. He was taken aback that she accepted “more or less straight away.”

WITH THEIR ENGAGEMENT set for February 24, Diana moved to Clarence House to protect her from the anticipated press hordes. The Queen’s Lord Chamberlain, Lord Maclean, read a brief statement at 11 A.M. in the ballroom at Buckingham Palace—the very place where Charles had first been displayed when he was only a few hours old.

Press coverage of the couple’s television interview that afternoon made little of Charles’s “whatever ‘in love’ means.” *The Times*, in its front-page story, emphasized instead their dismissal of the age gap. “It is only twelve years,” said Charles. “Lots of people have got married with that sort of age difference. You are as old as you feel you are. I think Diana will keep me young, apart from anything else. . . . I shall be exhausted.” Diana confessed to being daunted by her future role, but said, “With Prince Charles beside me I cannot go wrong.”

Her father, Lord Spencer, spoke in front of Buckingham Palace to the jubilant crowds around him. He mentioned the beautiful engagement ring, a twelve-carat sapphire encircled by fourteen diamonds, that Diana had shown him the previous night. Diana had withstood unremitting press scrutiny for six months and had come through “with flying colors,” he said. “She never breaks down,” he added, “because Diana does not break down at all. It never got her down at all. She had great courage and resilience.”

In the evening, the Queen Mother hosted a small dinner for Charles and Diana at Clarence House. Ashe Windham, the Queen Mother’s equerry, thought Charles and Diana “seemed very devoted,” but he also felt uneasy that she appeared “way over her

head.” When Charles’s grandmother presented Diana with a sapphire and diamond brooch to celebrate the engagement, the future princess seemed overwhelmed by the gift.

Charles wrote to a friend several days later that he was “very lucky that someone as special as Diana seems to love me so much,” and he looked forward to “having someone around to share things with.” He expressed his pleasure that so many people were delighted by his decision. But he didn’t mention his own conflicted feelings.

After the announcement, Diana moved into a suite in Buckingham Palace that had been used by Charles’s governess and nanny. Her rooms were on the same floor as Charles’s, but in a remote part of the nursery corridor.

Despite having grown up amid luxury and privilege, Diana was nonplussed by many of her fiancé’s attitudes. Years later she told historian Paul Johnson about her first encounter with Charles’s dressing room, “where he would have all his shirts laid out in open racks.” The valet would put a shirt on the prince’s bed, and, as Diana recalled, “Charles wouldn’t like it so he would ring the bell, and the valet would come, and Charles would ask him to get another shirt.” Diana asked the prince, “As a matter of interest, instead of ringing for him, why not walk to the rack and get a shirt yourself?” Replied Charles, “He’s paid to do it.”

Charles and Diana’s first big evening out was on March 9, when she caused a sensation in a black low-cut evening gown at a Royal Opera benefit. It was a fashion faux pas to wear black (reserved for mourning in the royal family), not to mention to show so much cleavage. The tabloids pounced: “Di Takes the Plunge,” blared the *Daily Mirror*. “Di’s Daring Debut,” screamed the *Daily Express*. Diana was rattled, especially by one columnist’s criticism of her “ounce or two of puppy fat.”

On weekdays, Diana scarcely saw Charles. Even after their engagement, she wasn’t a priority for him. “I tend to lead a sort of idiotic existence of trying to get involved in too many things and dashing about,” he said shortly before his wedding day. “This is going to be my problem—trying to sort of control myself and work

out something so that we have a proper family life.” Yet he showed no inclination to shed even the smallest commitment, whether for his work or his sporting pursuits, in favor of spending time with his new fiancée.

Charles’s career as Prince of Wales was moving on two contiguous tracks. Edward Adeane, reflecting the wishes of the Queen and Prince Philip, was steering him in a traditional direction. Charles had visited government offices as well as insurance firms, finance companies, and manufacturers to learn the workings of industry and business, a once-over-lightly tutorial that *The Times* said was “more like the crash course in public life organized for Miss World.”

At the same time, through The Prince’s Trust and other new ventures, Charles was intent on putting his strong opinions into practice and making more of an impact on British life by concentrating on such areas as the environment, education, and race relations. With the benefit of his independent wealth from the Duchy of Cornwall, he was busy creating his own universe: existing within the broader obligations of the royal family, but enjoying exceptional leeway in setting his own agenda and creating his own role.

Two books written in the 1970s proved particularly influential on Charles’s outlook: the 1972 Club of Rome report, *The Limits to Growth*, which predicted an exhaustion of the world’s resources within a century due to overpopulation, industrialization, pollution, and food production; and *Small Is Beautiful*, the 1973 collection of essays by E. F. “Fritz” Schumacher, a German-born economist trained in England and committed to socialism.

Schumacher was an early critic of globalism who espoused economic development based on “local resources for local needs” and reliance on renewable resources rather than fossil fuels. He believed that mankind must “move towards completeness and holistic living” and away from the “dominant industrialist-materialistic-scientific world view.”

For Charles, Schumacher’s credo melded neatly with what he was absorbing from Laurens van der Post in their correspondence and periodic conversations. The prince had met with Schumacher at Buckingham Palace soon after the publication of his book and had

eagerly taken on his theories. The prince began to speak of the danger to the “integrity of the individual,” who is “nothing more than a small cog in a vast machine.”

AS CHARLES PURSUED his various causes, Diana was slowly falling apart. One of Charles’s biggest mistakes was a six-week-long overseas tour starting on March 24 that took him to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Granted, it had been planned six months in advance, along with the rest of his crowded diary, but for the sake of his relationship with Diana, he could have trimmed his duties and at least curtailed the trip. Only five days into his journey he told a friend that he “much regretted” having committed to something so ambitious. Diana had wept on his departure.

Before leaving, Charles had contacted Oliver Everett, who was posted at the British embassy in Spain after his service in the Prince of Wales’s office had ended the previous June. Charles asked the diplomat to work for Diana on a temporary basis, to “show her the ropes” during the prince’s absence. Charles felt confident that his fiancée would be in good hands.

But he made yet another miscalculation that stirred Diana’s insecurities. She later said she had overheard Charles murmuring endearments to Camilla on the telephone. Sensing a threat, she asked Charles if he still loved Camilla. His reply was genuine but inartful: He explained that she had been “one of his most intimate friends” but that their intimacy had ended. This was not a “clear answer,” Diana said.

Everywhere Charles went on his overseas tour he was welcomed enthusiastically, widely acknowledged to be the most popular member of the royal family. In Wellington, New Zealand, nearly twenty thousand people turned up to greet him. It was the last time he would experience that level of acclaim, with the spotlight on him alone.

He arrived in the United States on May 2 to receive the first honorary fellowship from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. In a high-profile setting before an influential audience, Charles criticized the damaging effects of industrializa-

tion on the individual in the West, compared to India, where he had been impressed that people were sustained by their spiritual life even while living in poverty. He said the countries of the West had to get smaller rather than bigger.

It was a controversial critique, not to mention a romanticized view of the Third World, especially coming from a man who lived in such luxury. His pointed remarks were largely ignored, a source of frustration that would intensify as the press dwelled on Diana rather than the substance of his ideas. In 1981, the thirty-two-year-old British prince simply wasn't yet well known for his causes, so his words carried little weight.

Ronald and Nancy Reagan gave him an elegant White House dinner attended by a glittering group of friends including Audrey Hepburn, Cary Grant, Bobby Short, William F. Buckley Jr., Diana Vreeland, and Walter and Lee Annenberg. It was the Reagans' first evening with Charles since they met at Sunnylands seven years earlier when Ronald Reagan had been governor of California, and they treated him to a four-star meal complete with a "Crown of Sorbet Prince of Wales."

The prince met separately with Vice President George H. W. Bush, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and twice with the president. He and Reagan talked about Northern Ireland and the potential role church leaders could play in promoting peace. Charles urged the British ambassador, Sir Nicholas Henderson, to stress in his report on the visit that "it was not just a social junket."

"I have fallen in love with Mrs. Reagan!" Charles exclaimed. In a note to the president and First Lady written on his flight home, he expressed his "greatest possible pleasure," especially to have "a pudding named after me." He told Nancy that he was "a devoted admirer for life!"

CHARLES'S RETURN TO England extinguished his upbeat mood. While he was abroad, he had corresponded with Diana and talked to her on the telephone, and he remarked that she seemed to be doing well. But back at Buckingham Palace, she was actually in bad shape: anxious, depressed, and volatile. She felt claustrophobic, in-

timidated, and isolated. Behind closed doors, she was suffering from bulimia, the secret binge eating and self-induced vomiting that had afflicted her before in times of great stress. (Only toward the end of her life did Diana reveal that her symptoms had first appeared during her adolescence.)

She looked alarmingly thin. Having lost nearly fourteen pounds, she had shed all traces of the “puppy fat” ridiculed in the press. Her waistline had contracted from twenty-nine to twenty-three inches, causing her wedding dress to be taken in several times. Faced with what he called the “other side” of her previously jolly behavior, Charles blamed pre-wedding jitters.

Years later, Diana said she had wept before Charles left for Australia because the previous night Charles had interrupted their conversation to take a call from Camilla, who wanted to say goodbye. It’s hard to judge that claim, since Diana had “difficulty telling the truth,” as her brother Charles put it. Her suspicions about Camilla strengthened after the two women had lunch while Charles was away. Before long, suspicion spilled over into obsession.

Charles felt a rising alarm over Diana’s moods and tantrums. “Is this normal?” he asked one friend. “Had he been a private individual, he would not have pressed on, but by then he was too committed,” said Patricia Mountbatten. “He realized that if he called it off, it would ruin Diana’s future. If the Prince of Wales didn’t want her, who would?”

When the couple met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who would be conducting the ceremony, and his assistant, who had known the prince since Cambridge, the two men thought that Charles seemed depressed. Their only hope was that Diana would “grow into it.”

Despite Diana’s distress, Charles still didn’t cut back his activities. He traveled to Paris for a charity ball. He went to Cardiff, Wales, for an environmental project, and he was even absent for Diana’s twentieth birthday on July 1, opting instead to visit an exhibit on teaching the disabled in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

In mid-June he returned to the United States for his first visit to New York City. He flew by Concorde, the aircraft he had denounced

as a student at Cambridge, and stayed for only a night. Nancy Reagan joined him at a luncheon cruise in New York harbor aboard publisher Malcolm Forbes's luxurious yacht the *Highlander*, with corporate sponsors who had underwritten that evening's reception and ball at Lincoln Center to benefit British and American cultural charities. At the black-tie event, Charles and the First Lady danced to "New York, New York."

The hectic trip was marred by ugly demonstrations. Thousands of IRA sympathizers stood outside Lincoln Center, screaming "British murderer" and carrying signs saying "Royal Creep." Lieutenant Governor Mario Cuomo sided with the protests against Britain's denial of "basic civil rights" to the Irish. New York mayor Ed Koch said that he hoped the British would "get out of Ireland." Clearly the Prince of Wales was in no position to change government policy, but he was a handy symbolic target for outrage. Such eruptions were a rarity, given the overall goodwill toward the British monarchy. But less than two years after the brutal murder of Mountbatten by the IRA, the taunts tested Charles's composure, which he maintained with equanimity. As he boarded the *Concorde* for the trip home, *The Times* judged his visit "one of the more uncomfortable 24 hours of his career."

THE WEDDING WAS set for Wednesday, July 29, 1981, at St. Paul's Cathedral. Charles did his best to make it memorable. He chose nearly all the music, asked New Zealand soprano Kiri Te Kanawa to sing an aria, and invited the three orchestras under his patronage to perform. He said he wanted everyone to have "a marvelous musical and emotional experience."

At his direction, the ceremony was designed as the most ecumenical royal wedding to date, with prayers from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, as well as Charles's unconventional Cambridge mentor, the Rev. Harry Williams, who had introduced the prince to parapsychology and encouraged his search for his "inner self." Charles also commissioned watercolor artist John Ward—a familiar presence at Balmoral, where he made sketches of the landscape for the royal

family—to sit in the cathedral choir and create a painting of the service.

It was telling, in retrospect, that Diana wanted to break tradition and not promise to “obey” as part of the wedding vows. Explaining the decision in a press conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that they had all agreed in the spirit of modernity, adding that he had made the “usual clergyman’s joke about ‘It’s a bad thing to start your marriage off with a downright lie.’”

Others around Charles detected an unnerving willfulness behind Diana’s vulnerability. One of his former advisers met her for the first time in the prince’s Buckingham Palace office. “I thought, ‘There is a rod of steel up this woman’s back,’” he recalled. Her own father later confirmed as much when he said, “Diana is very determined indeed and always gets her own way. I think Prince Charles is learning that by now.”

The weekend before the wedding, Diana unraveled in public at a polo match in Hampshire. In an open grandstand filled with strangers, she burst into tears. She had suddenly felt overwhelmed by the spectators crowding too close, and she fled before the players even took to the field.

The next day, with Charles playing polo at Windsor before a crowd of twenty thousand, including Nancy Reagan and other dignitaries who were in England for the wedding, Diana barely held herself together, looking “nervous and unsmiling.” For the entire match, she hid at the back of the royal box where the Queen, Prince Philip, and Princess Anne entertained their guests.

She later attributed at least some of her upset to another of Charles’s ill-advised decisions. He had asked Michael Colborne to buy more than a dozen gifts for friends, including Kanga Tryon and Camilla Parker Bowles, as a gesture of gratitude before his marriage. Camilla’s was a gold bracelet personalized with a blue enamel disk engraved with the initials “GF.” The monogram stood for “Girl Friday,” Charles’s nickname for his “intimate friend.”

Poking around Colborne’s desk, Diana discovered the bracelet and confronted Charles. She assumed the initials stood for “Gladys and Fred” (two characters on *The Goon Show* beloved by Charles

and Camilla), which to her represented them as a couple. Charles tried unsuccessfully to disabuse her, but he compounded Diana's suspicions when he insisted on presenting the bracelet to Camilla in person as his final farewell. Diana recalled feeling "devastated."

In the afternoon of July 27, Charles and Diana made an unexpected appearance at St. Paul's for their second wedding rehearsal. Diana looked demure in a high-necked dress with long sleeves and seemed cheerful as she and Charles waved to the crowds when they left the cathedral. But in the car, Diana broke down again—"sobbed my eyes out," she recalled, "absolutely collapsed . . . the Camilla thing rearing its head."

That night all appeared tranquil at a party hosted by the Queen at Buckingham Palace for hundreds of friends and relatives. Sally Westminster, widow of the 4th Duke, said afterward that Charles "left his bride for several hours" to spend time with the Goons comedians in another room. "The pathetic little Lady Diana was left alone without an escort, to make conversation to people she did not know."

On leaving the party, the royal couple repaired to their separate suites in the Palace for the night. Twelve years later, James Whitaker of *The Mirror* made another scurrilous contribution to the lore of the royal marriage by alleging that Charles and Camilla slept together in his apartment that night. Diana chose to believe it, but the story was a fabrication. Andrew Parker Bowles, who attended the party with Camilla, denied it, as did Michael Colborne, who said, "It would have been impossible—and suicidal."

On Tuesday, Diana moved to Clarence House for the night, where, as she told the Queen Mother in a "Dearest Ma'am" note of thanks, she was "a thoroughly spoilt bride to be." The newspapers filled page after page with profiles, romantic histories, analyses, tables of ancestry, photos, and predictions.

On her wedding eve at Clarence House, Diana could hear the spectacular fireworks celebration in Hyde Park. Unknown even to her sister Jane, who stayed with her, Diana had a bulimic attack and was "sick as a parrot." Down the Mall at Buckingham Palace, Charles lingered at a window, watching the well-wishers. He was

joined by another of his female confidantes, forty-two-year-old Lady Susan Hussey, a lifelong friend who the previous day had been appointed as her youngest lady-in-waiting by the Queen.

He did not share the exuberance on display outside the Palace walls. Rather, he was in “a contemplative mood.” As he listened to choruses of “Rule, Britannia,” Charles found himself weeping. Stephen Barry asked what was wrong. “Stephen,” he said. “Is it possible to love two women at the same time?”

THE NEXT DAY, standing before a congregation of 2,500 guests in St. Paul’s and a television audience of 750 million around the world, Charles wore the full-dress blue uniform of a naval commander. Diana was nearly engulfed by her voluminous ivory taffeta and lace dress with its twenty-five-foot train, her veil glistening with ten thousand hand-embroidered mother-of-pearl sequins and crowned by a Spencer family diamond tiara.

Bride and groom both flubbed their lines. Diana called her husband Philip Charles instead of Charles Philip, and Charles left out the word *worldly* from his vow to share his worldly goods. They signed the marriage register as “Charles, P, bachelor, 32, Prince of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of Buckingham Palace,” and “Diana Spencer, aged 20, spinster of Althorp.”

It was a “very grand English upper-class wedding,” in the words of *The Times*, with glorious music featuring English composers Britten, Elgar, Bliss, and Vaughan Williams. The procession of horse-drawn carriages—escorted by the Household Cavalry under the command of none other than Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Parker Bowles—returned to Buckingham Palace in the shimmering mid-summer heat. But the Parker Bowleses were not included in the wedding breakfast for 120 guests at Buckingham Palace (nor, for that matter, were Kanga Tryon and her husband). Diana later said she had been so fixated on Camilla that as she and her father walked slowly up the aisle at St. Paul’s, she raked the congregation until her eyes settled on her nemesis, with her “pale grey, veiled pillbox hat.”

The royal family made its ceremonial appearance on the Buck-

ingham Palace balcony, where Charles thrilled the crowd by kissing his bride, which he had failed to do in the cathedral. For their getaway, Charles wore a gray suit and Diana a salmon-colored dress and short-sleeved jacket, girlishly trimmed with white collar and cuffs, and a matching feathered hat. An open landau trailing heart-shaped silver and blue balloons carried them to Waterloo Station for the train to Broadlands, where they would begin their honeymoon as Charles's parents had done thirty-three years earlier.

Poet Laureate John Betjeman composed a "Wedding Ode of Joy" to celebrate the marriage. His verses ended by casting back to Charles's 1969 investiture in Wales when "you knelt a boy, you rose a man. And thus your lonelier life began." Now, he wrote, "The scene has changed, the outlook cleared. The loneliness has disappeared." He could not have been more mistaken.