



When the Fairy Tale Crashes into Reality

*H*er mother had been in love with a wallpaper hanger. And the wallpaper hanger wasn't her father. Multiple nannies took Mommy's place most of the time.

When it was time to start school, she didn't fare much better there. In fact, at sixteen, she failed every standardized test. Nor did she make it in the world of ballet, which was her aspiration. But she was too tall and lanky to become a ballerina.

So to make ends meet, she became a part-time kindergarten teacher, part-time housecleaner, and part-time nanny. Yet when she was only twenty years old, even though the odds seemed stacked against her, she married the man of her dreams, an ultimate prince charming.

He liked the sport of polo and had a nice smile. He seemed shy like her, yet opinionated. And he came from outlandish money. If it weren't for one "minor" character flaw, he would have been perfect: Prince Charming had a fondness for women. Well, at least another woman besides her. A woman that he continued to see even after he

was married.

Even though their marriage produced two beautiful children, his affair produced a wife so desperate for attention and affection that she developed an eating disorder, had an affair or two of her own, and even tried to take her life.

Yet, in spite of all her pain, one fact remained that would never change: She was a princess. And no matter how her husband's actions made her feel, how her mother-in-law totally disregarded her, or how her own insecurities from an absent mother and dysfunctional family plagued her, one could never remove that title. She was the Princess of Wales. Or Princess Diana, as we called her.

Princess Diana lived her life serving her kingdom. In 1987, she opened London's very first medical unit for the sole purpose of administering care to AIDS patients. She took their hands and refused their shame. Some rebuked her. Others praised her. But those who were dying really didn't care that they were being loved by a princess; they were simply thankful to be loved at all.

Princess Diana tried to rid the world of land mines. She held children with missing limbs and relished their grateful smiles. She took flowers to the elderly and ladled stew for the children she met on her tour of Zimbabwe.

Yet Princess Diana was never able to see her own true beauty. Although the world declared her to be one of its most beautiful people, and though designers everywhere wanted her to wear their clothes, she could not see how beautiful she truly was. And though lepers and AIDS patients saw beyond her outward appearance to an inner beauty they rarely glimpsed, she never grasped it for herself.

Princess Diana's life was nothing like that of another woman, a woman she admired very much, the one with the wrinkled face and slumped shoulders. The one to whom children were drawn as if she were as beautiful as Princess Diana.

Mother Teresa's life ended shortly after Princess Diana's death. And while their hearts shared a similar passion for servanthood, their inner freedom was as different as their stature. Princess Diana lived in a self-made prison. Mother Teresa chose to live in a convent. Princess Diana graced the cover of many magazines. Mother Teresa graced the streets of squalor and the depths of society's filth. Princess Diana married the man of her dreams only to end up broken and abandoned—again. Mother Teresa surrendered her soul to the One of her dreams and found joy in ministering to the abandoned.

Mother Teresa understood the great perils of abandonment. She perceived it as an "awful poverty."

Princess Diana drove sports cars and wore diamonds worth millions, yet lived with a destitute soul. Mother Teresa didn't own a car, and often wasn't even seen with a cross around her neck, yet she lived with her soul owning life's greatest possessions.

Both Princess Diana and Mother Teresa held the title of "princess." Both served their kingdoms well. Mother Teresa never graced the cover of *People* magazine's "Fifty Most Beautiful People" issue, yet she—more than Princess Diana—knew what it meant to live a life of joy and fulfillment, a life in which she was truly *free to be beautiful*.



Remember the first time you saw Snow White? She looked fabulous in that red lipstick. Remember the first time your mother read you the story of Cinderella? You would have killed for a fairy godmother like that.

Then when you were alone, and no one was looking, you *were* a fairy tale princess. Did you steal away to your mother's closet and grab those gaudy, strappy heels before digging out your plastic tiara and

baton to use for a magic wand? And in one beautiful afternoon, you were a princess.

Then you feigned sleep on your bed, or ran up the stairs in a vain attempt to beat the imaginary clock. And kissing you gently or running after you with exuberant gusto was your prince. And he was always perfect. Didn't always look the same, because that depended on which boy you were crazy about at the time, but he was always perfect.

And what woman wouldn't want to be like these fairy tale princesses? They were kind and honest and valued and well-known. And their men—well, who wouldn't want someone rich and noble and so indescribably handsome to chase evil away? Plus, those women wore some rather fabulous clothes and killer shoes!

And truth be told, for little girls, this was our filter for life: a fairy tale. Then came real life. And when life didn't measure up, many of us decided to forget about dreaming altogether. It's been said that by age twenty-two, most women have forgotten how to dream. Welcome to reality; it happens to the best of us.

Yet sometimes it's so much easier to see need in others than we could ever comprehend in ourselves. After all, we could see Princess Diana's need. What we once saw as the ultimate life of privilege we began to look at with great pity. We pitied her pain. We pitied her depression. We pitied her bulimia. We pitied her marriage. And we would have had such wonderful advice for her—had she asked: "Girl, don't you see who you are? Why, you're a princess! Forget about that prince if he refuses to love you. He's not that great, anyway," we'd say. "Get on with life. Love will find you again. Enjoy your children. Enjoy your talents. You have such a good heart and such a kind soul. Just let that teach you how to dream again."

It would have been so easy to help Princess Diana set her course

for victory, wouldn't it? Yet many of us, even now, have never realized that we are entangled in the same kind of unmet fairy tale that the Princess of Wales faced. We threw hope out the window years ago. And now, we've quit trying altogether.

We've trapped ourselves into a comparison game that convinces us we don't measure up. The beauty we once thought was possible is now nothing more than one of those fairy tales our mothers told us, and just about as unlikely as a fairy godmother who can turn mice into horsemen.

The unmet expectations are the only thing we expect anymore. And when we realize that it's impossible to cram our double-wide foot into that glass slipper, we begin to believe that there probably never was a slipper made for us anyway. We are certain we've been left out of the process completely.

So, instead of feeling like royalty, we feel like a royal catastrophe. And we begin to believe we have nothing to offer. We surrender ourselves to a life of *no-effect*. Better to stay home out of the game than to be the one who brings in the rainstorm. Well, that depends on our perspective.

Having a game called because of rain isn't always a bad thing. Sometimes rain can take a losing team and give it the time necessary to regroup, restrategize, reconnect, and remember.

When life starts to pour down on us, it's time to regroup our faith and remember what we believe in. It's time to restrategize so that we can avoid making the same mistakes once again. Reconnect with those people who help us find the value in ourselves. And remember—remember that we made it to the game because we were good.

Yes, we are here in this life—this game—because we've got something to offer. We got here because of a dream. That dream may be tucked so far back, we've forgotten all about it. Or maybe we've been afraid to surrender ourselves to the dream, knowing that it's going to

Discovering...

require risk and sacrifice. It's time to change all that. Let the rain fall. It just gives us time to dig out those dreams and decide what to do with them.

Now, it is time to meet the challenge. You see, if a princess falls asleep because of a wicked witch's spell, only to wake up staring into the face of an enchanting prince, it isn't the worst thing that can happen, now is it? Neither is having a life of absolute surrender. You may have to make earthly sacrifices but they will be saturated with eternal results and only heaven will reveal all your treasures.

Just like Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, we all want to live a beautiful life. But beauty isn't about good genes. Beauty isn't about a great heritage. Beauty isn't even about marrying a prince. Beauty is about the heart. Beauty is being willing to do what it takes and being brave enough to dream again. Beauty is about knowing where dreams come from and who really gives them.

But be warned as we take this journey. Just because you have a dream, your circumstances won't necessarily change. But because you have a dream, you can change your response to those circumstances. Now don't kid yourself. You're going to wake up tomorrow, and your breath will stink, the world will be better off if you put on some make-up, and no matter how hard you suck it in, the mirror may still reflect the Pillsbury Doughboy rather than a Victoria's Secret model. Life is still going to be life. But through these next few pages, our goal is to help you remember that you once had some desires of your own. And to remind you that being *free to be beautiful* is about what goes on inside of you.



Like Princess Diana, the one thing that the pain of this world can never take away is your title. You are a princess. Whether the mirror reflects it or not, you are a beautiful princess. It just might be time to

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change mirrors. Take a look into the mirror of truth and you'll learn that God, the very one who fashioned you and formed you, is the King; therefore, you are a princess. There really is no other destiny you could have.

With such a title comes entitlement. Not entitlement to dictate or belittle. Not entitlement to wallow or hide. Not entitlement to be served. No, this is an entitlement of another kind. As a daughter of the King, you have been given an entitlement to dream and to love. An entitlement to choose and to grow. An entitlement to serve.

But when life paints your portrait for the world to reflect on, or just for your family to remember, our desire is that your painting will be even more beautiful than it is today.

"You know, the one thing I can say about that lady is that she may not have graced the cover of Vogue, but her picture looked fabulous underneath the magnet on the refrigerator. She never won the Nobel Peace Prize, but she won multiple hearts in our neighborhood. She didn't marry Prince Charming, but she never let him know it. And the lady at Neiman Marcus couldn't remember her name, but the lady at the grocery store checkout line lit up like a Christmas tree when she came through the door. And even though she was never Miss Universe, she was just as beautiful to me. In fact, she was *free to be beautiful*. It took her a while to believe it. But once she did, she never forgot it."