

War of the Waleses:

(A History of the 1990s in the style of Shakespeare)

If we offend it is with our good will
Ay me no no, imperfect prologue that!
If we offend, it is against our "Will"
(This work bears not the mark of Stratford's bard -
The cut and paste of fools with too much time)
Not shewn by his King's Men but us lot here.
Our stage will show but shadows of the past
Presented tonight. All for your delight
We are not here; (We've nicked some gags and lines)
But pardon us, we do not wish to mock,
Make light of any loss that was sustained.
Forgive us our indulgence in this tale
For third-hand tellings never can be truth
Reflecting through two mirrors; sometimes more.
We take no sides, nor any cause, but ask
You to assume this black box for a world,
Actors for princesses and governments.
In these two hours to come will pass five years.
We would entreat you to see our mean work
As the "Will" that was not and never shall:
"James the First",
"Not A Lot About Something"
"Love's Labours Won",
"The Happy Danish Prince",
(Pericles written with a good first Act).
Long may Shakespeare be regurgitated.
(That's not good, we'll make them think of vomit)
Long may Shakespeare's words, like zombies, live on
Immortal, overwhelming in number
(Our metaphor is onerous and wrong -
It does get better, that I'll warrant you.)
Now having our most bald excuses made
Forget you heard us 'til our tale is played.

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Act 2 Scene 1

(House of Commons December 1992)

MAJOR

It is announced from Buckingham Palace,
That sadly the Prince and Princess of Wales
have chosen at this time to separate.
They have no plans to start on a divorce,
and their positions as royals unchanged.
This parting has been reached amicably*,
and they will both continue to partake
in the upbringing of their children.
Their Royal Highnesses will carry on,
with separate programmes of their public lives,
The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh,
though saddened, understand and sympathise,
with the hardships that led to this moment.

Their majesties particularly hope,
that the invasion of their privacy
Now ceases without further delay.
A modicum of privacy for them
will be essential if they're to provide
A happy upbringing for their children.
That is the text of the announcement.
I speak for the whole House and those beyond
in offering our support towards them both.
I also know the House will sympathise
With the wish they should both be left alone.
The House should know that the separation
Has no effect on our constitution.
Succession to the throne remains unchanged,
There's no reason why the Princess of Wales
should not be crowned Queen in due course some day.
I know there will be sadness at this news.
I also know their royal lives go on.
The full support and all the affection
Of the house and the country stays the same.

(Time advances to October 1993)

MAJOR: Let me tell you what I believe.
(The CHORUS jeers)
For too long, too many people have been belittling
(The CHORUS babble abates)
the things that made this country. We have allowed things to
happen that we should never have tolerated. We have listened
too often and too long to people whose ideas are light years away
from common sense.

OMNES: *(Low rumbling)* Hear hear

MAJOR: We destroyed whole communities and replaced them with tower
blocks.

OMNES: Shame!

MAJOR: That was wrong.

OMNES: Wrong. *(Laughter)*

MAJOR: In our schools we did away with traditional subjects - grammar,
spelling, tables, and the old ways of teaching them.

*(The CHORUS point fingers from side to side, apportioning blame
on the other party)*

MAJOR: Others told us that every criminal needed treatment, not
punishment. Criminal behaviour was society's fault, not the
individual's. Fashionable, but wrong, very wrong. The older
generation see a world that sometimes seems to be changing too
fast for comfort, old certainties crumbling, traditional values falling
away. Week after week, month after month, they see attacks on
the very pillars of our society - the Church, the law and even the
monarchy, as if 41 years of dedicated service was not enough.

And they ask “where is it going, why has it happened and above all, how can we stop it?”
(The CHORUS’s roar has increased throughout this speech) It is time to return to our roots. The old values.

OMNES: Hear hear

MAJOR: It is time to return to core values, time to get back to basics , to self-discipline

BROADSHEET: (To audience) Politician self-discipline thyself!

MATRAVERS That lot only know discipline from a Mayfair whore!

(CHORUS jeers again)

MAJOR: We stand for decency and respect for others . . .

(CHORUS descends to a rabble)

MAJOR: We must go back to basics

(The CHORUS is silently reverent for a few moments...)

MAJOR: And the Conservative Party

(...and the CHORUS descends to outraged jeering, complete pandemonium.)

MAJOR: Will lead the country back to those basics right across the board.

WIDDICOMBE: Britons never shall be slaves!

MAJOR: There is a job to be done - a job of service to this nation and I believe in service. There is a job to be done, a job I was elected to do and I propose to go on doing it.

(All leave – Diana appears, watched by a member of the paparazzi. (PAP))

Act 2 Scene 3 **December 1993**

DIANA *And what shall poor Diana do, alone
They have picked her off and closed her down
Flanked on both sides by his hunting party
“Go for the weaker ones”, he always says.
O. Diana will not be harried so*

A year ago, I spoke of my desire
To still continue with my work unchanged.
However, life and circumstances change.
I hope you will forgive me if I share
With you today, my plans for the future

Oh Diana, there is no plan, I do not know what

*I should do or say. I hate myself, I
Hate my husband for driving me to this
But I must be cautious, they'll be watching
The Firm's support was never all that much
Is now withdrawn and now they want me out
They have their heir and spare, they don't need me.*

At the end of this year, when I've finished
My official engagements, I will be
Reducing the extent of the public life
I've lead so far. I attach importance
To my charity work but I shall seek
The solace of a far more private life
My priority will be our children,
William and Harry, who deserve love,
As much love, care, and attention as I
Am able to give, I would also like
To add that this decision has been reached
with the full understanding of the Queen.
I hope that you can find it in your hearts
To understand and give me time and space
That has been so lacking in recent years.
Your kindness and generous affection
Has carried me through these difficult times
I thank you, from the bottom of my heart.
Diana the huntress, flushed out and found
That's it, no more, I've gone to ground

Act 3 Scene 1 May 1994

(The QUEEN and CHARLES are on walkabout)

CHARLES I can't pretend that I'm enjoying this
The double act did work in some respects
For far too long I walked in Dian's shade
Alone I find it difficult to shine
It worries me that still she steals the show

It's not like I can put on a Bruce Oldfield dress.

QUEEN Perhaps you should.

CHARLES Mama!

QUEEN Just my little joke. Oh come on Charles.
We must do as we have always done.

CHARLES I'm not like you, I don't get a speech at Christmas.

QUEEN Then perhaps you should speak. If speaking were required.

CHARLES The people want an insight to my life
I'm not entirely certain as to why
for I am just an ordinary man.

QUEEN: We are more ordinary than you know

Old fashioned yes, but nothing bad in that.
The anachronism of royalty
Is not lost on me, but remember this:
The royal duty. This is not a job
It is a calling and this family
Will serve as long as this nation has need

CHARLES I did not choose this, I was born to it!

QUEEN No royal ever chooses, fate slipped down our branch
Accept your fate with grace and live this down.
Now as to that, remember Aberfan?
A hundred children died in that one school
A loss that great, that sudden, affects us all
We decided that the town should have more time
Before there was a royal visit planned
But something changed and we were criticised
It was our first wrong step in fifteen years
We took advice upon the people's mood
And let them make that documentary
Let them see us at home watching telly.
I do regret that choice, a step too far.
But won't deny the power of the piece
Thirty million viewers: There was a thirst
To see your father frying sausages.

CHARLES: They want to see the ordinary man
That underneath it all we're just like them.
It must amuse them. Sarah and Andrew
Did well at first by seeming normal

QUEEN: You can be too normal, Charles. Candour may not serve you well.
Commoners resent you being too much like them. Class only
matters to the middle, you know.

Get a Dimbleby.

(Exit QUEEN)

CHARLES: The current Prince of Wales and one day, king
Descended from Plantagenets and God
I see my birthright's myth and majesty
Comforts not the scornful minds of men
My role is an affront to their freedoms.
I don't expect my subjects to subject
I am not divine, but will defend them.
Will do my duty, if that's what they wish.

Act 3 Scene 2 June 1994

*The interview is watched by and commented on silently by two
journalists, TRUEPRINT and BROADSHEET*

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a sense of where the deer are likely to be from
here?

CHARLES: The deer are very cunning and the thing is, they always they always choose positions that are out of the wind, in the lee – and they're they are absolute geniuses at finding the most sheltered spots. The hinds live in specific areas, they live right out – they attract the stag – the stags are in a gentlemen's club the rest of the year.

INTERVIEWER: For the prince there is no conflict between hunting to kill and loving the wild.

CHARLES: You want to look for a stag that is older. Act like the wolves. Go for the weaker ones. There simply isn't enough food for them all to go round, balance the numbers to the available food supply.

I am steward of every blade of grass

*This island's mine, by Elizabeth my mother
Which she would take from me. I once loved her
Whatever love means. Most fair Diana
I taught her how to rule, the qualities
Of this isle, the majesty, divinity
Of kings: each burn, lea, tree and heather sprig
Cursed be that I did so! She cared not,
Her Royal Highness is all of the heart
Her heart fills not with royal blood but love.
All is love with her, her ungloved handshake
Healing, "hugging", loving. Love, love all love,
No thought. I'll rule with my sovereign head.*

After we married she became the star,

The crowd would sigh if I went to their side.

"Are you jealous, Charles?" Jealous? I am the heir!

I am the heir and my two sons come first.

I am sorry that this had to happen.

But now I, we, must look to the future.

INTERVIEWER: That future has now been clouded by the collapse of the Prince of Wales' marriage.

CHARLES: Well obviously I don't recommend it to anybody. Any breakdown of marriage is a terrible thing, the consternation and unhappiness and in the inevitable wake of it, turbulence. One of the difficulties of this life – the predictability of what other people would say...

*And what will people say? O, I care not
Be like your father, boy and stay the course.
Behold th'inquiring fools, their tapes and tricks
Why should I pander to the common man?
My father has no time to suffer fools
I'm not like him and nor was meant to be
But like him I resent the arrogance,
The incivility of public thought
My private thoughts are mine, I'll give thee naught.*

INTERVIEWER: Understandably, when your marriage collapsed, you form close friendships, you re-establish close friendships, of whatever character that friendship is. Were you, did you try to be, faithful and honourable to your wife when you took on the vow of marriage?

CHARLES: Yes, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: And you were?

CHARLES: Yes (*Pause*) Until it became irretrievably broken down, us both having tried. There is no truth in so much speculation. Mrs. Parker Bowles is a great friend and will be for a very long time. When marriages break down...it is your friends who are the most important and encouraging. Otherwise you would go stark raving mad. I am a private person. I'm not very good at being a performing monkey. I can't describe the horror of having to follow a schedule set out months in advance. And the constant intrusions of the media. (*exeunt*)

DIANA
My husband's face is never in The Sun
'less my gold light should chance to fall on him
Without my star the monarchy's undone...
So what would happen if that light should dim?
I warmed the frosted grounds of that old house
With summer sweetness, openness and love
She dazzles bright, your not so timid spouse
So shade me out, I'm sure you've had enough
Tonight as dusk approaches you will keep
The nation's gaze upon you, so you think
But no darkling cloud can ever make me weep
For in my velvet armour there's no chink
However much you suffer or confess
What they will notice is Diana's dress

BROADSHEET
In Rwanda a million have been killed
This domestic squabble should not be news

TRUEPRINT
Hugh Grant! What are you like you naughty boy!
Like it or not, there's a war going on here.
And the whole country is picking sides,
It's about who can win the hearts and minds of these people. We
don't tell them what to think. They tell us what to say. You've got
the media you deserve. Moving on... Party girl in coma after taking
rave drug! (BROADSHEET coughs - TRUEPRINT sighs and
starts a new article)
Th'Criminal Justice and public Order Act
Has been enacted.
(All enter and rave)
It defines a rave
As a gath'ring of 100 or more
At which loud amplified music is played
Predominantly characterised by
The emission of repetitive beats.
In the open air and at night

BROADSHEET
The revelry of youth is now at odds
With the sober judgment of our leader
Who seems trapped in 1957
His days are numbered if I've read this right
Resigned and forced his party to elect
Him over Redwood; but in Labour's camp
They've elected a new leader, someone young

Never mind the royals, here's the real war

Act 3 Scene 4 **June 1995**

MAJOR: The House is built on confrontation's rock
Two swordlengths separate our benches sides
We govern by division, and we fall
Through our disunity. We set to fight,
oppose, gainsay, fast bowl, throw a googly.
Another fight, another election
Redwood vanquished, my party is wounded
My adversary died, the other John
Called me "man with the non-Midas touch" I
Called him "Monsieur Oui: Poodle of Brussels"
I miss him still, Smith, my old opponent
Even now war continues, the old king
Sits on his throne and waits for May to come
Who is this young prince, this "call-me-Tony"
This New Labour...its like no-one listened
To what I had to say, I spoke with candour
"Back to basics", it was my credo
I wanted to be great but now all this...
When ministers behave like wanton boys
How "honourable" the Right Hons must seem
Like all families we fell to squabbling
Did Churchill have to deal with this, I mean...
Auto-erotic asphyxiation...
Affairs, Cash for questions for Al Fayed
Sleaze, sleaze and the tabloids feast upon it.
My Spitting Image puppet is so grey
Honest John, boring John. Look at that smile.
It's as if I'd gone swimming in the Thames
And left my clothes upon the riverbank
And when I came back he was wearing them
The world is changing. I don't understand
All gloss and shimmer, spin and shine. Ah well...
When the curtain falls it is time to get off the stage

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Act 3 Scene 6 **November 1995**

BASHIR Were you aware of the significance...
Becoming the Princess of Wales and then
Ultimately one day becoming Queen

DIANA I wasn't daunted and am not daunted
The responsibilities the role creates
It was a challenge. It is a challenge.
I desperately wanted it to work

BASHIR It's been suggested you were left to cope alone
Do you feel that was your experience?

DIANA They said "You can't feel sorry for yourself.
Sink or swim and you have to learn that fast."

BASHIR Were you happily married at that stage?

DIANA Ver' much. But if you're a man, a proud man...
He'd hear them: 'Oh she's on the other side'

BASHIR: "She's on the other side" what do you mean?

DIANA They weren't on the right side to wave at me

BASHIR The preference was for you and not for him?

DIANA Yes, which made me uncomfortable, unfair
Because I wanted to share it with him.

BASHIR Were things easier once you had your son?

DIANA Everyone was thrilled to bits...it had been
A difficult time. I had not been well.

BASHIR What effect did this have on your marriage?

DIANA It gave everyone a new label for me
"Diana's unstable, she's unbalanced"
So yes, I did inflict upon myself
I didn't like myself. I hurt myself.

BASHIR It was reported you had suffered
From bulimia, tell me is that true?

DIANA Yes. I had it for a number of years
Bulimia is a secret disease
You don't think you're worthy or valuable
I would come home feeling pretty empty
I think it was a symptom of my marriage

BASHIR: Your husband renewed his relationship
With Mrs Parker Bowles in 1986
Were you aware of that?

DIANA I already knew
A woman has her instincts and she knows

BASHIR: What effect did that knowledge have on you?

DIANA Devastated. Rampant Bulimia
Useless, hopeless and failed in everything

BASHIR And your husband was with somebody else

DIANA With a husband who loved someone else, yes

BASHIR You really thought that

DIANA Not think that, knew it
...there were three of us in this marriage
So it was a bit crowded. (silence)

BASHIR James Hewitt published "Princess in Love"
Were you unfaithful?

DIANA (Diana looks down throughout the next four lines)
I adored him, I was in love with him.
I mean there was a lot of fantasy in that book
Was devastated when that book appeared.
Really sad, the fairytale had ended
The attempts to discredit me were rife
I don't want a divorce but obviously
I must await my husband's decision

BASHIR Would it be your wish to divorce?

DIANA No. No.
It's not my wish.

BASHIR It would resolve matters.

DIANA Yes But what about the children? Our boys?

BASHIR Do you think that you will ever be Queen?

DIANA No. No, I don't, no.

BASHIR Why do you think that?

DIANA I don't think people will want me to be.
Actually when I say people I mean
The establishment I married into
They have decided I'm a non-starter
Because I do things differently because
Because I lead from the heart, not head
S'pose they see me as a threat of some kind.

BASHIR Do you think the Prince of Wales will be King?

DIANA I don't think that any of us know that.

BASHIR It's a question in everybody's head

DIANA I think the role presents limitations
That my husband would not want to have.
You ask me if I hope my son succeeds
The Queen before his father and I say
My wish is that my husband finds his peace
I am sure that many people doubt me
I'm sad because a marriage hasn't worked
I sit here with hope that there's a future
a future for my husband, a future
for the monarchy, a future for me
I'd like to be a queen of people's hearts
(The crew and Bashir leave)
She won't go quietly, that's the problem.
What has Diana done? What have I done?