

STARSTRUCK

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A MODERN ASTROLOGER

By

PENNY THORNTON

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CHAPTER VII

DEATH OF A PRINCESS

On 30th August 1997, at seven thirty pm, I boarded the 'red-eye' from New York to London. The journey of three thousand, four hundred and seventy-one miles, cruising at an altitude of thirty-seven thousand feet and taking roughly six hours was all too familiar to me. I had been flying the Atlantic, to and fro, like a human boomerang for the previous three years. This flight, however, was going to be one I would never forget.

Anyone who has done this night-sky crossing will know that sleep is difficult on a 747. Even with the lights in the cabin dimmed, a comfortable seat, eye-masks and earplugs, you never enter that deep level of slumber necessary for a restful night. The next day bloodshot eyes are the least of your problems. At six in the morning and some one hundred miles off the West Coast of Ireland, the lights came on and the captain's voice announced: "I am afraid I have some very sad news for you all." In the split second it took him to gather his thoughts, two possibilities flashed into my mind - the Queen Mother had died or there had been some catastrophe necessitating a diversion from Heathrow. Out of the ether came the words, "The Princess of Wales has been killed in a car crash."

The interior of an aircraft is a noisy place, the drone of the engines may eventually become a gentle background buzz but you can only clearly hear the person next to you. Yet, as the Captain's words echoed in my ears, it seemed as though a hush had descended on the whole plane. Time had certainly frozen for me, and as I looked around at my fellow passengers, everyone appeared very still. Now, in 2005, I might have logged on to the Internet via my wireless connection in order to obtain more information but then I simply sat in my seat, trying to take in the awful news.

In some ways her death was not a surprise to me. I had been concerned about several potentially violent factors in her chart that year, and although I had shared my fears with friends, including one of my editors, Sue James, and I had penned a piece for the Norwegian magazine, Norsk Ukeblad, on my concerns for Diana, I was not sure how that danger would manifest precisely. Now, with just the barest of facts to go on - her accidental death a matter of hours before - my mind raced alternately from the astrology of events to the Diana I had known. It seemed inconceivable that arguably the most famous woman in the world had been killed in a car accident, a result of human error. Surely, some lightning bolt had descended from the heavens, and struck her down.

I was still in a state of disorientation as I wheeled my baggage out of the Customs Hall and headed towards the welcoming arms of my friends, Kimberly and Robert Sylvester. They were not alone, however. Behind them stood a camera crew and a journalist, "What are your thoughts on this terrible accident, Penny? Was it in the stars?" It was the beginning of one of the strangest weeks of my life.

The television stayed on all day. I unpacked, my boys returned from their holiday with their father, I went to the supermarket, I cooked, we ate. And throughout it all, the telephone rang constantly - friends and family, journalists with requests for comments and producers asking me to appear on news programmes. A combination of the shock of her sudden death and conflicting accounts of events - an early report maintaining that she had walked away from the accident with a broken arm - added to the wave of sheer disbelief flooding the day. Images of the crushed Mercedes being towed away on a truck from the Pont d'Alma, footage of her last moments with Dodi Fayed at the Ritz Carlton, Diana in shorts in Sardinia, the arrival of her coffin at Northolt Airfield, the stricken face of Prince Charles, a sombre and dignified Tony Blair and an ashen and angry Mohammed Fayed. These are the images that remain. I also thought constantly about Princes William and Harry. With my sons, Alexander and Dominic, of a similar age - Alex having been born a mere three weeks after William, and Dominic some three months after Harry - and both so close to me, I could hardly bear to

contemplate their grief. It was all too dreadful.

The first few days of a return home to England were always a challenge – not only coping with jet-lag but being suddenly plunged back into active service as a mum. Dominic was starting a new school on Tuesday, 2nd September so there were last minute items to purchase, along with six weeks of mail to catch up on and the usual columns to write. And the telephone rang constantly. Kimberly was to stay with me for another month so there were an extra pair of hands in the kitchen and, more importantly, someone with whom to share the unfolding events. Amid the television footage of Diana's last moments, the opinions of royal pundits and the memories of friends and associates, we watched the field of flowers growing steadily outside Kensington Palace. On Tuesday, we made the journey up to London to see it for ourselves and to take some white Longi lilies of our own. The sight of all those flowers outside Diana's home was compelling, they formed a quilt of many colours. There were extravagant bouquets of gladioli, birds of paradise and stargazer lilies and little bunches of daisies, and every so often, nestling among the blooms, were candles and balloons, all with tender, heartfelt messages attached to them. It was very quiet and very sad.

We spent an hour or so in the gardens, reading some of the messages and exchanging wistful sighs with fellow mourners, then made our way back to Haslemere.

Tuesday was a memorable day for other reasons. Having taken Dominic to his new school, I was home just in time to put on the Lorraine Kelly show on GMTV. At the opening of the programme Ms Kelly announced that an astrology spot was starting that day, and sure enough some minutes later an astrologer dressed in a boiler suit and sporting a pair of large hooped earrings popped up on the screen. And behind her stood a brightly coloured circular revolving board upon which were displayed removable symbols of the planets. While I always welcome a good astrology segment on television I had a problem with this one. Six months earlier I had had meetings with GMTV to which I had brought that very concept of the revolving board. Given the enthusiasm of the producers and their desire to put astrology on the map, so to speak, I had been fully expecting to join the programme in the autumn. Consequently, in the wake of September 2nd's show, letters revolving around the issue of copywrite were exchanged. Fortunately, the matter was settled amicably a month later. While the producer never maintained that the company had used my idea, the horoscope board disappeared the week after its debut, and the astrologer herself four weeks later. And the explanation offered for not using the person whose idea it was in the first place? "I'm afraid you're just too posh, Penny." (Quack, quack!)

In the afternoon of the 2nd September, I picked up Dominic from his new school in Midhurst. There were no smiles, merely a quivering lip, and as soon as we turned the corner onto the Fernhurst road, a small volcano began to erupt. His first day had not gone well. He informed me that he was not returning and that I had ruined his life. This stream of outrage continued unabated far into the evening. He refused all offerings of his favourite snacks, indeed he turned down food of any kind, and eventually locked himself in the bathroom, leaving Kimberly, Alex and myself to make cooing sounds to him from outside the solid pine door. And still the telephone rang. At ten pm, an exhausted twelve-year-old came out of his cave, and accepting a mug of hot chocolate, climbed up to his bunk bed announcing "I'm not going back. This is the worst day of my life."

As I tucked him up in bed I said to him: "You know, Dom, what do you think David Beckham would do if he'd had a lousy day on the football pitch? Decide to give up the game, or go back the next day, vowing to win?" I received a sleepy "Mmm...", which I took to be an appreciation of my wisdom. Years later he was to explain that he had heard what I'd said, but it made no difference. He remained in his black hole to which I had consigned him by tearing him away from the school he loved and the friends he'd known almost all his life. Nevertheless, he went back to Midhurst the following morning. I cancelled all my working plans in London for the day and waited anxiously for a call from the school, which much to my relief never came. When I picked him up later that afternoon, he emerged from the school grounds with a group of boys, laughing and joking. He never looked back.

You see, that's a double Sagittarius for you – all tears and tragedy one day, adventure and high jinx the next.

But while that late summer thunderbolt had struck Dominic a glancing blow it had delivered a mortal wound to Diana. And it had come in the form of a solar eclipse.

Stargazers in times past – and we're talking centuries ago – considered eclipses to be the harbingers of dreadful events, but with the rise of depth psychology in the early Twentieth Century astrologers became less enthralled with the concept of fate and more inclined to view the horoscope as a map of the psyche. Maybe too, because such strides were being made in medicine and science, the human race seemed less vulnerable to the vicissitudes of nature – we were more able, perhaps, to dictate our own course. And in keeping with this sense of growing omnipotence, eclipses lost some of their lugubrious lustre. However, I have continued to treat eclipses with respect. One only has to look back on some of the most momentous events in British royal history to see the signature of an eclipse therein. Take, for instance, the abdication of Edward VIII on 10 December 1936, some three days before a solar eclipse in Sagittarius, the death of George VI and the accession of Queen Elizabeth II on 5th February, 1952, four days before a lunar eclipse in Leo, and the separation of Diana and Charles on 9th December, 1992, on the actual day of a total solar eclipse in Sagittarius. So with the solar eclipse of the 2nd September, 1997 falling on a crucial part of Diana's horoscope, I knew an event of some magnitude was on its way.

To be precise this eclipsed new moon fell on her Mars-Pluto conjunction, a significant enough astrological event on its own, but throughout 1997 transiting Pluto had been angling that self-same point. And Mars-Pluto conjunctions do not have the best of reputations in astrology.

Almost every living person will have one or more 'difficult' aspects in a horoscope: it is the harsh angle which inspires the painful experiences that make us or break us, in much the same way as the discomfort caused to an oyster when a piece of grit gets into its shell eventually results in a pearl. And, of course, there would have been hundreds of people along with Diana born on July 1st 1961, who shared the same Mars-Pluto conjunction, none of whom met their demise in a traffic accident. Yet Diana's Mars-Pluto conjunction was the source of much that was painful to her in life, it was both the route to her triumph and her tragedy.

As I explain in Chapter five, the planets and signs do not make us who we are and they do not dictate what happens to us: they reflect who we are and mirror our experiences. Each of us will respond in subtly different ways to any one planet, point or sign, the defining factor being a combination of our basic nature, our upbringing and our experiences – life is not so much what happens to you, but what you do with what happens to you. Thus, the proximity of Mars – a planet correlating with aggression, ambition, desire and courage – to Pluto, whose keyword is transformation, showed that Diana had the potential to be powerfully changed by acts of bravery or by acts of treachery. I had discussed this idea with her during one of our meetings, and had this to say about it in *Synastry*, written in 1981, “[Mars-Pluto] presents a violent theme and suggests the likelihood of exposure to dangerous situations...” and in *With Love From Diana*, written in 1994, “...I did consider that [Diana] would be the focus of a violent attack, whether this manifested as intense criticism or a physical assault, even some kind of assassination attempt.” Clearly, the courage of the Mars-Pluto conjunction manifested in her crusade against land mines, yet the self-destructive quality of this aspect lay at the heart of her bulimia, and it was also at the basis of her 'suicidal' approach to more than one relationship. No one can generate as much passion as someone with a Mars-Pluto conjunction, and no one can muster more hate, revenge and self-loathing.

Thus, in 1997, as Pluto made its way to and fro this volatile conjunction in her natal chart, Diana's life in tandem veered to extremes: while she found passion and love with Dodi Fayed her public image took a nose dive – never before had she received such hostile criticism in the press, it seemed as if her star were in free fall. Diana when threatened always went into attack, and it was no doubt

this pugnacious aspect that compelled her to utter her famous remark to the gaggle of journalists and photographers gathered on the shores of the Mediterranean, watching her frolic on the Fayed yacht, Jonikal, in the July of that same year: "You're going to get a big surprise with the next thing I do." This statement has been largely interpreted as her intention to convert to Islam and marry Dodi Fayed but it may simply have been an impulse driven comment designed to tantalise, with no clear plan behind it. Tragically, the world was not just surprised by what happened next but rocked on its axis.

My first instinct about Diana's death was that it was no accident, and I said as much, off camera, in an interview with CBS News that same week. However, during the intervening years I have changed my opinion more than once. Aside from the fact that I do not want to be seen as a knee-jerk conspiracy theorist I like to believe I have an open mind, and as new information comes to light challenging my initial assumptions I can change my position accordingly. First impressions, however, are often unfailingly accurate. At the very least Diana's death was convenient. She was a thorn in the monarchy's side, a loose cannon on the deck of the royal yacht. In 1997 the possibility that Prince Charles, the future King of England, might marry Mrs Parker Bowles posed many problems: Camilla, already deeply unpopular with the British people, faced a daunting PR exercise to become accepted as Queen, and with a beautiful, adored and high-profile Princess of Wales roving around the world, that task would be made immeasurably more difficult. (No one in the Establishment would want a repeat of the embarrassing fracas in 1821 when a distraught Caroline, Princess of Wales, and legally separated from her husband, George IV, had to be physically restrained from entering Westminster Abbey during his coronation!)

There are many question marks hovering over Diana's last hours, some of which I will cover shortly, but for the moment I am going to take a more esoteric view of the events leading up to her death.

We all dream, even though many of us cannot remember our dreams and when we do attach no importance to them. I believe dreams can be both prophetic and certainly insightful. Of course, some nights my experiences in the dream time are clearly a kind of psychic house-cleaning, a rerun of episodes in the day and issues that my unconscious has dredged up for closer examination. On other nights I have spectacular dreams, out of the body journeys and flashes of the future. When a dream is significant, not just a 'house-cleaning' exercise, the experience is vivid, full of colour, scent, sound and voice-overs, its storyline is compelling and my emotional response powerful. Carl Jung, the psychologist, would have called such dreams "big dreams".

In the summer and autumn of 1989 I had two "big dreams". I not only recorded the dreams in my journal but such was their emotional impact, I sent them to Diana. They appear below and are exactly how they were written in my note-book, and as published in *With Love From Diana* in 1994.

1) I was in the front row of an audience watching a play. The curtain went up and on the stage, sitting at a large desk, was Her Majesty, the Queen. She was delivering a sombre speech, but no matter how hard I tried, I could not hear what she was saying. I knew only that it concerned the future of the monarchy. My eyes were drawn to Charles and Diana, who were just behind her. They were posing for photographs and were seated – Charles behind Diana – on a child's rocking horse. Diana was laughing and Charles was urging her to be more responsible and to look serious for the cameras. There was a flash and a large explosion. All that was left on the stage was an empty car seat on a raised dais.

2) I am sitting in a sand dune having a picnic. Diana comes toward me, dressed in white with a black cloak around her. She sits down beside me. I feel awkward and unprepared for her sudden and unannounced arrival. She is telling me about someone called Peter who has been fired because of her. Apparently, he is going to France and will be undergoing plastic surgery to conceal his identity. She goes on to talk to me about William, and while she does this, she holds up a large figure 3. She then begins to cry, and I urge her not to give up on the marriage. She recovers her composure and I take up the topic of Peter referring to him as a past relationship. "It's not over. It's very much on," she says. The scene changes to my then home, Bramshott Court. Diana comes into the sitting room with

a large gift-wrapped present, which she hands to me. When I open it, I find a strange looking object about three-feet in size – the only thing this object vaguely resembles is the ornate hand of a large clock. I am embarrassed at the enormity of the gift and refuse it, saying that Prince Charles might be cross if she gave it away. I escort her to the car and when I return William is seated in the same chair. He is much older and sporting a beard. He says to me, “They don’t tell me everything, you know, For a few minutes we lost complete radio contact with them...” As he was saying this to me, I saw an event from an aerial point of view: Two police motorcycles and a white car streaming ahead, leaving a black car on its own. Two vans approach from either side and prevent the black car from moving forward. The dream ends in chaos and I hear my own voice saying, “Isn’t anyone going to do anything...?”

Although these two dreams came a couple of months apart I believed them to be connected – two halves of the same story – and it was the power and detail of the second that compelled me to send them both to Diana. She came straight back to me the day she received them and although there were many other factors that I imagined she would have taken to heart the point she found to be most interesting was the mention of the name, Peter. She took the phrase a past relationship to be a reference to one of her own past lives as a Christian martyr!

By the time of the accident in the August of 1997 I had forgotten the existence of these dreams and it was only when clients and friends who had copies of *With Love From Diana* began to telephone me commenting on the eerie connections to the real life circumstances of her death that I began to take a closer look at them.

Over the years I have come to see that there are many ways to extract the meaning from a dream. Leaving aside the psychological component for a moment, there is the story line, which may or may not represent a real life sequence of events, and there are the images that stand out. The action of writing down the dream is as important as the dream itself: the words we choose to describe what we have seen can unlock the entire puzzle, and rather like doing a crossword, anagrams and double-meanings are to be found. For instance, in the October of 2004 I had a dream in which I was on a cliff path; in front of me was a large bush and a voice-over declared, “It’s a big night.” A black dog came towards me and stuck his muzzle in my ear. Since this dream was just prior to the US election I took it as a sign that George Bush was going to win. What remains to be fully translated is the image of the dog and the muzzle: the dog may represent Bush’s being dogged by events during his Presidency or it may symbolize a terrorist (dog of war) putting a gun to Bush’s head; the muzzle could be interpreted as the open end of a firearm, or the action of Bush’s being muzzled or silenced, which again has two meanings, death and impotence. In this way, by extracting the words and phrases outlined in bold in the Diana dreams, the following emerges:

The Queen. A sombre message. The future. Charles and Diana. Serious. Cameras. A flash. Large explosion. An empty car seat. Sand dune. Black and white. Sudden and unannounced. Peter. Fired. France. Plastic surgery. Identity concealed. The number 3. Marriage. Not over, on. Gift. Prince Charles. Cross. Giving it away. Car. William in the same chair. Loss of contact. Police. Motorcycles. White car. Black car.

I don’t think there can be any doubt that these dreams were prophetic. The Queen delivering a sombre message was an exact preview of a real event: forced by public pressure to make some kind of statement about the loss of Diana, Her Majesty did so from behind her desk at Buckingham Palace, some six days after Diana died. The future – this tells me that these are future events, and that they concern Charles and Diana. The matter is serious, which, of course it was. Involved in the events are cameras, a flash and a large explosion. Well, this is doubly interesting: members of the paparazzi with their cameras and flash bulbs were initially accused of driving Diana to her death. However, cameras and flashes may also figure more sinisterly: the seventeen government radar cameras situated between the Ritz and the Place d’Alma as well as the camera in the tunnel itself were apparently not functioning at the time of the crash, yet I have seen a full-frontal photograph of

the car on its fatal journey – Diana and Dodi can clearly be identified sitting together in the back seat behind Henri Paul and Trevor Rees Jones – which must have been taken along that route. And if CCTV or radar cameras did not take this photograph, who did? There have been various reports of a flash in the tunnel before the impact, whether this was an intensely bright light deliberately fired to dazzle the driver, a CCTV camera being activated, or a spark created by the Mercedes' collision with a car in its path. And, of course, there was a loud explosion as the car careered into the thirteenth pillar. The empty car seat has a literal meaning in that Diana was found in the well of the car leaving her seat empty, and it is also a metaphor for an empty throne. Sand dune is a reference to the desert sands of Egypt, linking events to Dodi Fayed. Black and white are real life features of events – photographs, black Mercedes, white Fiat/white Mercedes, and Diana was dressed in a pair of white jeans and a black jacket. However, the phrase black and white also infers reality - facts, no argument. Sudden and unannounced – well, that's what all accidents are. Peter fired – who is Peter? And did his being fired contribute to the events that led up to the crash? Or did a Peter fire something – a flashbulb, a strobe light or a gun? Or could Trevor Rees-Jones, the bodyguard, be seen as Peter, whose name means the rock? France – the accident took place in Paris. Plastic surgery to conceal his identity– Trevor Rees-Jones, who was the only survivor of the crash, had extensive plastic surgery to his face. Maybe too, there is some element of concealment here, whether of the events or identity. The number 3 may represent the three who were killed or three factors/people behind the crash. The marriage, closely followed by the phrase, it's not over, it's very much on could be a reference to the possibility that Diana and Dodi were planning to marry, and the controversy such a marriage would create is certainly a factor in the conspiracy theory. Prince Charles might be cross if she gave it away – this could be interpreted as Charles being angry over her apparent disregard for her safety (wearing a seatbelt would have greatly increased her chances of surviving the accident) or maybe this sentiment pertains to her giving her heart to another man, or, perhaps, revealing a secret. The car is another allusion to her death in a traffic accident. William is seated in the same chair: now, this also has more than one meaning. In my dream William appears older, which indeed he was at the time of her death eight years later, but his sitting in the same chair could imply that he may find himself in the same position as his mother. And does this merely infer that like Diana he will be adored by the public and pursued by the press or is it a warning of his own untimely death? He states, "They don't tell me everything..." which suggests that he is not always aware of everything that perhaps he should be aware of, including events surrounding his mother's death. For a few minutes we lost complete radio contact with them – it took three minutes for the Mercedes to leave the Ritz and reach the thirteenth pillar in the Alma tunnel, during which time there was apparently no radio or telephonic communication between the passengers and security. Police, motor-cycles, white car and black car were all key features involved in the events leading up to the fatal accident – Diana's black Mercedes, a white Fiat, and also reports of a white Mercedes and a 'large black car'. Prevent the black car from moving forward – this could be an allusion to the fact that death prevented Diana's life story from continuing, or it could be a literal reference to the report that an obstacle impeded the Mercedes progress. I was intrigued to read the witness statement of a Monsieur Bonin who found himself next to the Princess's car at the traffic lights at the base of the Champs-Elysees that night in which he declared, " [There was] a very big black Mercedes off to my left [and] a big black motorcycle registered in [department] 75, Paris, with two people on it. The person on the back was carrying a camera... As the light turned green... there seemed to be a black car in front of the Mercedes which did not start, blocking the Princess's car."

Of course, there is very little in these dreams to decipher whether the crash was an accident or brought about on purpose, only, perhaps, William's enigmatic statement that they don't tell him everything. Certainly, the major reason for the rise and rise of conspiracy theories is the incomprehensible proposition that the death of such a luminous being could have been caused by a series of catastrophic decisions and a drunk driver. Nevertheless, there are some untidy loose ends, one of which arises from M. Bonin's statement in which he describes the pillion passenger on the motorcycle taking "pictures [of the interior of the Princess's car] continually with a flash light", yet none of the photographers' films confiscated from that night by the police at the scene of the accident yielded any such shots. There is also some controversy as to why Henri Paul continued along the

expressway to the Alma Tunnel when the most direct route from the base of the Champs Elysees to Dodi's apartment was via Avenue George V. According to Trevor Rees-Jones' account of that night given to his co-author, Moira Johnston, in *The Bodyguard's Story* the mystery as to why Henri Paul did not head up the Avenue George V could be explained in this way:

"Trevor's best record of events... has to be the findings of the French criminal investigation's rigorous fourteen-month technical examination and reconstruction of all the evidence. One of its conclusions – that Henri Paul may have been forced into the Alma Tunnel because motorcycles blocked the exit he intended to take – is still a leap of faith unsupported by hard proof."

The voices of reason are in no doubt that Diana's death was an accident. According to Trevor Rees-Jones, on the night of the 30th August, 1997, it was Dodi who, alarmed by the aggressiveness of the paparazzi, decided to cancel dinner at Chez Benoit and dine instead at the Ritz. It was Dodi's decision to leave the sanctuary of the hotel for his apartment, he who insisted that Henri Paul drive the Mercedes, and Dodi's idea that two decoy cars should be driven to the front of the hotel to confuse the paparazzi so that he and Diana could make their escape via the back door. Such random events could in no way allow for an assassination plot to be carried out. And yet it is not impossible. As Sherlock Holmes opined, when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

We can assume that if the crash were an assassination, the organization involved would have had considerable experience. They'd know what they were doing. Indeed, the accident in which Diana died bears an uncanny resemblance to one outlined in an MI-6 proposal to eliminate the Serbian President, Radovan Milosevic. Richard Tomlinson, an MI-6 operative who worked in its East European controllerate from March 1992 until September 1993 declares in a sworn and testified statement made on 12 May 1999 that he had been shown a document in 1992 by Nicholas Fishwick, an MI-6 officer, in which three methods of assassinating Milosevic were outlined, the third being a staged car crash, "...possibly during one of his visits to ... Geneva... [which could be achieved] by disorientating Milosevic's chauffeur using a blinding strobe light as the [motor] cavalcade passed through one of Geneva's motorway tunnels." Diana was a frequent visitor to Paris and with her growing appreciation of Mohamed Fayed's avuncular friendship she had often stayed at the Ritz Hotel which he owned, so it is not inconceivable that a proposal could have been drawn up by a first class team of agents along the above 'Milosevic' lines which could be activated at a moment's notice when it became appropriate. Not, of course, that I am suggesting MI-6 did so. Tomlinson also declared in this same statement to have seen files naming Henri Paul as a French informer for MI-6 and that one of the paparazzi photographers that routinely followed the Princess of Wales was a member of "UKN" – a small corps of part time MI-6 agents. I should add that Richard Tomlinson's reputation is in shreds such that his statements must be treated with circumspection, yet MI-6 have gone to extreme lengths to make his life very, very uncomfortable, and there is no doubt that he was one of its operatives...

By 29 August 1997 all those on a need-to-know basis would have been informed of Diana's and Dodi's intention to leave the Jonikal in Sardinia and head to Paris the following day. In fact the paparazzi was waiting at Le Bourget airport that morning when the private plane, Gulfstream 4, carrying the couple landed. On landing Diana's and Dodi's luggage was taken to his apartment on the Rue Arsene, where they intended to spend the night. By lunchtime, dinner had been booked at the fashionable restaurant, Chez Benoit, for 9 45 pm. In the wake of the intense press presence, however, this booking was cancelled at the last minute and the couple was driven to the Ritz, where they dined instead. Yet even with this unforeseen change in plan the most important element of a possible assassination plot would have still been in tact – that Dodi and Diana would at some point return to his apartment, and probably later that night. Were a blueprint to be activated on the 29th, all the protagonists would have more than enough time -over twenty-four hours - to be in place – motor cycles, cars, strobe lights and so on. It did not even matter which car took them to Dodi's apartment, just as long as it went through the Alma tunnel. Any driver, drunk or sober, would have had no

chance of avoiding a violent collision with a pillar were he to have been heading into the Alma tunnel at a speed of 70 mph and either disoriented by a bright light and/or clipped by a motorbike or car. That M. Paul may have been as high as a kite on a cocktail of anti-depressants and alcohol was an accidental plus – he was only summoned by Dodi to be the driver an hour before the crash.

Clearly, and in a way not atypically since human perception of an unexpected and shocking event is notoriously fragile and capricious, there are some radically differing witness accounts of that three-minute journey from the Ritz to the Place d'Alma. According to Agence-France-Presse, British secretary, Brenda Wells, was driving toward the Alma tunnel behind the Mercedes when she was deliberately forced off the road by two motorcycles, which in turn were followed by a black car. Brenda is one of several witnesses to claim seeing “very strong lights like flashes” in the tunnel prior to impact. Speaking on CNN on 31 August 1997 American tourist, Joanna Luz, claims, “We heard a huge explosion, like a huge gunshot... there was a screech [of tyres] then another explosion...” Mohamed Medjahdi whose grey Citroen BX was some thirty to forty yards in front of Diana's Mercedes said the car was “slewing across the carriageway... completely out of control... [and he] accelerated away just before a loud explosion and the limousine crashed into a pillar.” (The sound of an explosion has been explained as the result of Henri Paul using the drive shaft of the automatic Mercedes as a gear stick in a moment of blind panic: in the forensic reports there are no references to any explosive material found on the Mercedes or any of the four passengers.) According to British lawyer, Gary Hunter who heard the crash from his hotel room directly above the Alma tunnel. “I saw a small black car fleeing from the tunnel at approximately 60-70 mph. The car was being shadowed by a white Mercedes.” (Incidentally, despite Mr Hunter offering this key information to the French investigative team, the judicial authorities declined to take it.) M. Benoit Boura, who was travelling in the opposite (eastbound) direction in the tunnel and saw the crash describes a “small dark car” moving slowly in front of the Mercedes, the Mercedes losing control and crashing into the pillar, after which “a motorbike slowed down, passed the Mercedes then accelerated and left”. Another witness, Gaelle Levistre, also saw a “small dark-coloured car” in the path of the Mercedes. Brian Anderson, an American businessman travelling in a taxi at some distance behind the Mercedes, stated on a CBS Special aired on June 11, 1998 that he saw a damaged motorcycle on the ground as he and his driver passed the scene. In fact at least six vehicles passed the wreck of the Mercedes before traffic was stopped by the police.

From all the many divergent accounts of the accident, there are several possible candidates for a car that may have precipitated the crash – a white Mercedes, a large black car, a small dark car, a black Fiat and a white Fiat - but the discovery of smears of paint on the wrecked Mercedes appeared to confirm that not only had there been an impact with another vehicle but that the vehicle in question was a white Fiat. To this day the white Fiat has not been found – and it is tempting to speculate that it never will since so many witness accounts describe the “small” vehicle as dark-coloured. It is unlikely that the car seen by Gary Hunter exiting the tunnel was Medjahdi's grey Citroen BX because his car had no trace of damage to its rear, nor anywhere else. And without the “other car” a crucial piece of the crash evidence is missing.

To all intents and purposes the French Enquiry was painstaking and thorough yet in all my researches I could not find a satisfactory explanation for the motorcyclist (or motorcyclists) seen close on the tail of the Mercedes at various points in the three minute journey. The Californian businessman, Brian Anderson, who was riding in a taxi along the expressway to the Alma tunnel told CBS News that he was passed by a black Mercedes closely tailed by two motorcycles, the first of which was mounted by two people who seemed determined to get in front of the car, “ I felt the motorcycle, certainly without hesitation and any doubt whatsoever, was driving aggressively and dangerously.” Yet according to several reports those journalists on motorbikes who followed the Mercedes from the Ritz to the Place de la Concorde were left behind at the traffic lights there when the Mercedes sped off just before they turned to green. Therefore, they could not have been the motorcyclists seen moments later by witnesses, including Mr Anderson, hotly pursuing the Mercedes along the expressway. Unless we assume that all the witnesses to report them were out and out liars, fantasists

or severely visually challenged one or more motorbikes played a part in the accident. According to the official police file, the first members of the paparazzi on their motorbikes appeared on the scene at least two minutes after the collision, which supports their testimony that they were some considerable distance behind the Mercedes during its flight. Furthermore, after being arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter, all ten of the paparazzi were subsequently cleared of the accusation. So who was riding the motorbikes seen by so many?

It is possible that two people as paranoid as Diana and Dodi would have perceived an unidentified motorcyclist close to the car as a threat, which would explain why Henri Paul put his foot down. But let's imagine that this was no ordinary photo-journalist determined to get a snap of Diana and Dodi in the back seat of a moving car but a man with a different kind of mission altogether, an assassin: all he would have to do would be to gesticulate aggressively, even show a gun, to compel the Mercedes to accelerate away as fast as possible, simultaneously forcing it into a dangerously aligned tunnel. If we take this hypothesis a little further, should there have been a clear and present danger, the highly trained, utterly professional, Trevor Rees-Jones, would have instructed Diana to get onto the floor of the car in order to remain out of the line of fire, while at the same time, fearing an almost inevitable crash, might have slipped his own seat-belt around him. This would explain why he alone of the four passengers was wearing a seat-belt, and, perhaps, why Diana was found in the well of the car, her back pressed up against Rees-Jones's seat. What is truly hard to believe is that Trevor Rees Jones and Diana would have allowed Henri Paul to drive at such an insane speed, careering madly along the streets of central Paris upon which there was traffic, unless they felt in fear of their lives.

What also strikes me as odd about the accident is that in the list of items belonging to the four occupants of the Mercedes found in the interior of the car and in the surrounding crash site, there was not one mobile phone. Among the effects of Henri-Paul listed in the police file were 12,250 francs (£1,500), a savings account passbook, and two sets of keys; among those of Rees-Jones were a black leather address book and a Visa card receipt; Dodi's effects included a rectangular Cartier watch with a maroon-coloured crocodile watchband and a gold Asprey cigar-clipper; and among Diana's possessions were a bracelet with six rows of white pearls and a clasp in the form of a dragon, a Jaeger-Lecoultier watch with white stones and a pair of black Versace high-heels, size 9. But no cell phones. Not a one. It is almost inconceivable that neither Diana, Dodi nor Rees-Jones would be carrying a cell phone, and we know that Henri Paul had his with him since he is shown using it in the footage prior to the departure from the Ritz. Even if any or all of the mobile phones found in the wreckage were immediately removed from the site by the police for the purposes of protecting the privacy of the dead and injured, they should still have been listed. Which suggests to me the possibility that someone other than a bone-fide member of the police or the emergency services had deemed it necessary to remove them in the remote chance that a frantic S.O.S. call had been made in those last terrifying seconds. I am reminded here too of the strange statement in my 1989 dream, "... for a moment we lost complete radio contact with them." Perhaps this was indeed a veiled reference to the loss of a vital means of communication – a cell phone.

But whether by accident or design, the Mercedes entered the tunnel at a speed at which navigation was compromised: that it collided with another vehicle surely sealed its fate.

Which brings us to another crucial point, that people in a car travelling at 60-70 mph and meeting with a concrete obstacle have no chance of survival unless they are wearing seat belts. While the car comes to an abrupt halt the passengers continue to go forward at 60-70 mph, thus loosing the internal organs from their moorings. Conspiracy theories make much of Diana's treatment in the aftermath of the crash – for instance, why did the first doctor on the scene, Frederic Mailliez, appear to change his story, at first explaining to CNN that he thought "this woman had a chance" and stating in the medical journal, *Impact Quotidien*, that Diana's "condition did not seem desperate" then in mid-October revealing that her heart had been "ripped out of its place in her chest" and that "no one had ever survived this kind of lesion before", although, of course, he must have known that if a rupture is incomplete – and given that she did not die within moments of the crash the rent must have been

partial – lives can indeed be saved. That it took so long to extract Diana from the car and transport her to the Pitie-Salpetriere hospital raises another question for many, although clearly the French practice of stabilizing the injured at the scene and travelling slowly in order to prevent further damage to a patient through braking and accelerating, seems eminently sane to me. Nevertheless, were the crash to be the result of an assassination attempt it would be essential to establish straight away that the target(s) were dead or fatally injured so one or more people party to the plot would have to be in the immediate vicinity to ensure that the deed was done, so to speak. And in the smoke and panic of the aftermath of this accident no one can be sure who was there and for what purpose.

Clearly, Dodi's grief-stricken father, Mohammed, has done much to keep the rumour mill a-grinding yet while anyone can understand his desperate need for an explanation other than an accident, there is no denying that he has a vested interest in proving that the crash was deliberately perpetrated by such an organization as MI-6. Not only was it Dodi's decision to forgo the two-car convoy in favour of one, and for this car to be driven by a security man not a chauffeur, but his father had apparently okayed the plan. The Mercedes belonged to the Ritz, Henri Paul worked for Mohammed Fayed as did Trevor Rees-Jones. Thus the blame for the crash rests solely on the shoulders of the family Fayed. It is an example of almost unbearable hubris.

Which brings us to the glaring question: could Diana have evaded her death? Was it her fate to die in the Alma tunnel?

Many minds better than mine have grappled with the issue of fate and free will but over the years I have come to believe that our lives unfold according to a divine plan, and a horoscope provides the outline of that plan. However, we are not powerless, we have a huge part to play in the unfolding of our lives – fate is not so much what happens to you but what you do with what happens. And Diana through her choices placed herself on a trajectory for serious injury or death on 31st August 1997. For many years before her death I had been of the opinion that Diana would find personal happiness only by stepping out of the public spotlight. In an open letter to her at the end of my book *With Love From Diana* (1994) I explained. "It seems as though you have decided on a policy of fighting fire with fire and maintaining a high profile, and although I am an advocate of such tactics, in this case I think it is backfiring on you. I imagine the Establishment can still pack a powerful punch, and recent events must have shown you that you tend to come off worse in any skirmish... practically speaking, your original intention of retiring from public life was probably along the right lines.." (A full version of this letter can be found in the appendix on ppxxx.)

Unfortunately, by 1994 William and Harry spent more time away from Diana than with her so her daily life lost much of its warmth, meaning and vibrancy and increasingly she came to feel that her main purpose in life was her public role - a factor that brought her into conflict with the old palace guard, so to speak, who feared that Charles and the future of the monarchy were constantly being compromised by Diana's actions and beliefs. Had she taken a softer line and made a devoted effort to maintain a low-profile existence, she would, I believe, still be with us now. After all Greta Garbo managed to lead a private life, as did Jackie Kennedy Onassis: it may have taken time but eventually Diana would have been left alone. Sadly, it was a fundamental flaw in Diana's character, her desperate need for attention, that prevented her from taking the wiser route, the road less travelled. On December 3 1993 (four days after a lunar eclipse in Gemini, angling her Mars-Pluto conjunction) she stood at a life-crossroads and announced her withdrawal from public life; nine months later having become somewhat rudderless without a public role she reached another junction, and decided to return to the spotlight. I believe it was this decision announced on 23 September, 1994 that set in motion the series of events that led to her premature death.

Although my dreams of 1989 appear to show that the events of 31 August 1997 were already 'written', they could also have served simply as a warning. It may be that the notion of parallel realities is correct – that a certain course of action takes an individual along one route rather than another, leading to different outcomes, yet in other levels of reality (parallel universes, if you like)

the many and varied consequences of that “crossroads decision” co-exist. It may also be that our lifeline resembles a railway network, producing many connecting lines to a single destination and many stations, some of which can be stopped at or passed by. Had Diana left the public arena free for Charles to strut about in, she might well still have found friendship with the Fayed, she may still have holidayed on the Jonikal yet the outcome of the journey from the Ritz to the Rue Arsene may have been different, either because there would have been no need to eliminate her, or through the emotional maturity and independence she would have gained in that time she would have had the strength and wisdom to override Dodi’s foolish plan.

Then there is the question of whether Diana and Dodi would have lived happily ever after. My friend, Chris Robinson, the dreamer, who has worked with intelligence forces across the globe, had a dream the night following her death in which she was standing in front of a yacht which bore the name INFINITY, and she said to him, “You see, it’s the only way we could be together...”. It is open to interpretation as to whether she meant that she and Dodi would have not been permitted to marry in real life or whether this implied that given their complex personalities and inner demons their relationship would not have withstood any real life stresses. My guess is that Diana and Dodi would have made each other very miserable in the long run. Despite the deep-felt connection, each came to the relationship with considerable baggage – in fact what drew them together so powerfully in the way of their shared childhood loneliness and sense of rejection would surely have driven them apart - and it is unlikely that either of them would have been emotionally evolved enough to cope with the other’s ingrained patterns of behaviour. Dodi would no doubt have returned to his responsibility-free somewhat nomadic lifestyle, leaving Diana feeling unsupported once again by the man she loved.

The astrology between the two of them is nonetheless persuasive... Each had many qualities that the other needed, and there were enough stellar connections to set them on the way to a wedding if not many years of togetherness. While in layman’s terms the signs of Cancer (Diana) and Aries (Dodi) are not a match made in heaven – Cancer being a defensive, sensitive water sign and Aries an arrogant, assertive and self-centered fire sign – Dodi’s Ascendant in Taurus fell sweetly on Diana’s Venus and her Jupiter was slap bang on his Mid-heaven, revealing at the very least a great appreciation of each other’s qualities and an ability to bring out the best in each other.

I do not accept the notion that Diana’s and Dodi’s relationship was one of friendship alone, and that there was no romance between them. Leaving the astrology on one side, from the footage of the two of them together that August it is abundantly clear that they were in the throes of a new-found passion, and if they weren’t in love, they were certainly in lust. Furthermore, Dodi had informed several people close to him, including his butler, Rene Delorm and his father, that he intended to ask Diana to marry him, and, on the afternoon of the 30th August Diana had telephoned the Daily Mail journalist, Richard Kay, to whom she was particularly close, informing him that she would be withdrawing from public life in November: Kay is of the opinion that the reason was her intention to marry Dodi. As for the astrology: with Saturn, the planet of responsibility, nudging his Aries sun, Dodi was ready to ‘settle down’ and with Jupiter, the planet of increase, adjoining Diana’s moon in Aquarius, she was in a period of intense emotional expansion and fulfilment. And, although I risk adding grist to the conspiracy mill, one of the possible manifestations of Diana’s Jupiter-moon transit was pregnancy. (There is a fuller exploration of all the astrological detail in the Appendix on pp XXX.) Indeed, despite my re-hashing of the inconsistencies surrounding the accident I am in no way a die-hard conspiracy theorist but I do feel that there remain some serious unanswered questions. Sadly, it may be that a combination of French protocol – medical and otherwise - and the French Judiciary in its overzealous desire to maintain confidentiality, uphold the law and extract what it perceived as the most reliable evidence from a sea of conflicting witness statements has had the counter effect of appearing to be concealing the truth.

In the days following Diana’s death, it felt as if everyone I met was in state of grief. On Saturday, 6th, together with Kimberly and Robert, Alexander and Dominic I watched the funeral on television. We cried proverbial buckets. In grieving for Diana it seemed that we grieved for all the people we

had loved and lost in the past. I remember looking over to my sons as William and Harry joined their father, their uncle and their grandfather in a slow procession behind her coffin. It was unbearably sad.

As I prepared my notes for Death of a Princess I came across a curious synchronicity. The Alma tunnel is built on an ancient sacred site. In pre-Christian times the Pont d'Alma was a place of sacrifice, dedicated to the goddess, Diana. In Middle English the word Alma means soul, so that one translation of the Pont d'Alma would be the "bridge of the soul". During the time of the Merovingians (500-751AD), should two kings have a dispute over property, it was settled on the Pont d'Alma, and it was believed that those who died there in combat went straight to heaven. Strangely enough the person to die was considered the victor: he became "God's eyes" and was able to manipulate events on earth from his heavenly position. Certainly, Diana's spirit continues to live in many people's minds, and some would say she is still keeping an eye on the affairs of those most close to her heart...

Also, as I was working on this chapter, I had a dream. I was being driven up a steep road in an open jeep. It was dark and I could just make out the Cyprus trees lining the route and the sea far below on my right. I may have been on the Cote d'Azur. We reached a stone-built farmhouse. I got out of the car and walked towards the aged oak door, which was opened by Diana. She led me into the house and along stone passages until we came to a turreted tower. The surroundings were quite forbidding, and I felt afraid, but Diana took my hand and urged me to look out over the sea to a small patch of sky through which a shaft of light was extending. "No matter how small that light is, keep your eyes on it." I followed her gaze and as I did so I was propelled at great speed across the sea towards the light on the edge of the horizon – I travelled through ribbons of reds, golds, indigos and ochres until I left my body and floated ecstatically in a tranquil and starry space.

Of course, it is not surprising that I should dream of Diana while writing about her yet as I awoke the next morning I felt that she had given her blessing to this chapter.