

MARCH 2014. A CONCERT at Wembley Arena. Walking onstage I suffered the typical panic attack. I made my way to the center, clenched my fists, spat out the speech. There were fourteen thousand young faces before me, gathered for We Day. Maybe I'd have been less nervous if I'd concentrated more on them, but I was having a proper Me Day, thinking about the last time I'd given a speech under this roof.

Tenth anniversary of Mummy's death.

I'd been nervous then too. But not like this.

I hurried off. Wiping the shine from my face, and staggering up to my seat to join Cress.

She saw me and blanched. *You OK?*

Yeah, yeah.

But she knew.

We watched the other speakers. That is, she watched, I tried to catch my breath.

The next morning our photo was in all the papers and splashed online. Someone tipped off the royal correspondents to where we were sitting, and at long last we were outed. After nearly two years of secretly dating, we were revealed to be a couple.

Odd, we said, that it should be such big news. We'd been photographed before, skiing in Verbier. But these photos landed differently, maybe because this was the first time she'd joined me at a royal engagement.

As a result, we became less clandestine, and that felt like a plus. Several days later we went to Twickenham, watched England play Wales, got papped, and didn't even bother to talk about it. Soon after, we left on a skiing holiday with friends, to Kazakhstan, got papped again, and didn't even know. We were too distracted. Skiing was so sacred for us, so symbolic, especially after our previous skiing holiday, in Switzerland, when she'd miraculously opened me up.

It happened late one night, after a long day on the slopes, and a fun time at après-ski. We'd gone back to my cousin's chalet, where we were staying, and Cress was washing her face, brushing her teeth, while I was sitting on the edge of the bath. We were talking about nothing special, as I recall, but suddenly she asked about my mother.

Unique. A girlfriend asking about my mother. But it was also the way she asked. Her tone was just the right blend of curiosity and compassion. The way

she reacted to my answer was just right too. Surprised, concerned, with no judgment.

Maybe other factors were at play as well. The alchemy of physical fatigue and Swiss hospitality. The fresh air and alcohol. Maybe it was the softly falling snow outside the windows, or the culmination of seventeen years of suppressed grief. Maybe it was maturity. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, I answered her, straight-out, and then started to cry.

I remember thinking: Oh, I'm crying.

And saying to her: *This is the first time I've . . .*

Cressida leaned towards me: *What do you mean . . . first time?*

This is the first time I've been able to cry about my mum since the burial.

Wiping my eyes, I thanked her. She was the first person to help me across that barrier, to help me unleash the tears. It was cathartic, it accelerated our bond, and added an element rare in past relationships: immense gratitude. I was indebted to Cress, and that was the reason why, when we got home from Kazakhstan, I felt so miserable, because at some point during that ski trip I'd realized that we weren't a match.

I just knew. Cress, I think, knew as well. There was massive affection, deep and abiding loyalty—but not love everlasting. She was always clear about not wanting to take on the stresses of being a royal, and I was never sure I wanted to ask her to do so, and this unalterable fact, though it had been lurking in the background for some time, became undeniable on those Kazakh slopes.

Suddenly it was clear. *This can't work.*

How odd, I thought. Every time we go skiing . . . a revelation.

The day after we got home from Kazakhstan I phoned a mate, who was also close with Cress. I told him about my feelings and asked for advice. Without hesitation the mate said that if it was done it must be done quickly. So I drove straight over to see Cress.

She was staying with a friend. Her bedroom was on the ground floor, windows looking onto the street. I heard cars and people going by as I sat gingerly on the bed and told her my thinking.

She nodded. None of it seemed to surprise her. These things had been on her mind as well.

I've learned so much from you, Cress.

She nodded. She looked at the floor, tears running down her cheeks.

Damn, I thought.

She helped me cry. And now I'm leaving her in tears.

72.

MY MATE, GUY, was getting married. I wasn't exactly in the mood for a wedding. But it was Guy. All-round good bloke. Longtime mate of Willy and me. I loved him. And owed him. He'd been dragged through the muck by the press, more than once, in my name.

The wedding was in America, in the Deep South.

My arrival there set off a torrent of talk about . . . what else?

Vegas.

I thought: After all this time? Really? Is my bare arse that memorable?

So be it, I told myself. Let them bang on about Vegas, I'm going to focus on Guy's Big Day.

On the way to Guy's stag party a group of us stopped off in Miami. We ate a fabulous meal, visited a few clubs, danced until well past midnight. Toasted Guy. Next day we all flew to Tennessee. I remember, despite the crowded wedding schedule, finding time to tour Graceland, erstwhile home of Elvis Presley. (Actually, he originally bought it for his mother.)

Everyone kept saying: Well, well, so this is where the King lived.

Who?

The King. Elvis Presley.

Oh. The King. Right.

People variously called the house a castle, a mansion, a palace, but it reminded me of the badger sett. Dark, claustrophobic. I walked around saying: The King lived here, you say? Really?

I stood in one tiny room with loud furniture and shag carpet and thought: The King's interior designer must've been on acid.

In honor of Elvis, every member of the bridal party wore blue suede shoes. At the reception there was much kicking up of those shoes, young British men and women dancing drunkenly and singing gleefully without pitch or rhythm. It was riotous, ridiculous, and Guy looked happier than I'd ever seen him.

He'd always been cast as our sidekick, but not now. He and his bride were the stars of this show, the center of attention, and my old mate was rightly savoring it. It made me so happy to see him so happy, though now and then, as couples paired off, as lovers drifted into corners or swayed to songs by Beyoncé and Adele, I'd wander over to the bar and think: When's it going to be my turn? The one person who might want it most, to be married, to have a

family, and it's never going to happen. More than a little petulantly, I thought. It's just not fair of the universe.

73.

BUT THE UNIVERSE was just getting warmed up. Soon after I got back to Britain, the main villain in the phone-hacking scandal, Rehabber Kooks, was acquitted at trial.

June 2014.

The evidence had been strong, everybody said.

Not strong enough, the jury said. They believed what Rehabber Kooks testified on the witness stand, even though she'd strained credulity. No, she'd abused credulity. She'd treated credulity as she'd once treated a redheaded teenage royal.

Likewise her husband. He'd been caught on video throwing black bin liners full of computers and thumb drives and other personal belongings, including his porn collection, into a garage dustbin, just hours before the police searched their place. But he swore it was all a silly coincidence, sooo . . . no evidence-tampering here, sayeth the justice system. Carry on. As you were. I never believed what I read, but now I truly couldn't believe what I was reading. They were letting this woman walk? And there was no furor from the general public? Did people not realize that this was about more than privacy, more than public safety—more than the Royal Family? Indeed, the phone-hacking case first broke wide open because of poor Milly Dowler, a teenager who'd been abducted and murdered. Rehabber Kooks's minions broke into Milly's phone after she'd been declared missing—they'd violated her parents at the moment of their worst pain and given them false hope *that their little girl might be alive, because her messages were listened to*. Little did the parents know that it was Team Rehabber listening. If these journalists were villainous enough to go after the Dowlers in their darkest hour, and get away with it, was anyone safe?

Did people not care?

They didn't. They did not care.

My faith in the whole system took a serious hit when that woman got off scot-free. I needed a reset, a faith refresher. So I went where I always went.

The Okavango.

To spend a few restorative days with Teej and Mike.
It helped.

But when I returned to Britain, I barricaded myself into Nott Cott.

74.

I DIDN'T GO OUT much at all. Maybe a dinner party now and then. Maybe the odd house party.

Sometimes I'd duck in and out of a club.

But it wasn't worth it. When I went out, it was always the same scene. Paps here, paps there, paps everywhere. Groundhog Day.

The dubious pleasure of a night out was never worth the pain.

But then I'd think: How am I going to meet someone if I don't go out?

So I'd try it again.

And: Groundhog Day.

One night, leaving a club, I saw two men come racing around a corner.

They were headed straight for me and one had a hand on his hip.

Someone yelled: *Gun!*

I thought: Well, everyone, we had a good run.

Billy the Rock leaped forward, hand on his gun, and nearly shot the two men.

But it was just Tweedle Dumb and Tweedle Dumber. They didn't have guns, and I don't know what one of them was reaching for on his hip. But Billy held him and screamed into his face: *How many times do we have to tell you? You're going to get someone fucking killed.*

They didn't care. They did not care.

75.

THE TOWER OF LONDON. With Willy and Kate. August 2014.

The reason for our visit was an art installation. Across the dry moat were spread tens of thousands of bright red ceramic poppies. Ultimately, the plan was for 888,246 of these poppies to be spread there, one for each Commonwealth soldier who'd died in the Great War. The hundredth anniversary of the war's start was being marked all over Europe.

Apart from its extraordinary beauty, the art installation was a different way of visualizing war's carnage—indeed, of visualizing death itself. I felt stricken. All those lives. All those families.

It didn't help that this visit to the Tower was also three weeks before the anniversary of Mummy's death, or that I always connected her to the Great War, because her birthday, July 1, the start of the Battle of the Somme, was the war's bloodiest day, the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow . . .

All these things were converging in my heart and mind outside the Tower as someone stepped forward, handed me a poppy and told me to place it. (The artists behind the installation wanted every poppy to be placed by a living person; thousands of volunteers had pitched in thus far.) Willy and Kate were also handed poppies and told to place them on any spot of their choosing.

After we'd finished, all three of us stood back, lost in our private thoughts.

I believe it was just then that the constable of the Tower appeared, greeted us, told us about the poppy, how it had come to be the British symbol of war. It was the only thing that bloomed on those blood-soaked battlefields, said the constable, who was none other than . . . General Dannatt.

The man who'd sent me back to war.

Truly, everything was converging.

He asked if we'd like a quick tour of the Tower.

Course, we said.

We walked up and down the Tower's steep stairs, peered into its dark corners, and soon found ourselves before a case of thick glass.

Inside were dazzling jewels, including . . . the Crown.

Holy shit. The Crown.

The one that had been placed upon Granny's head at her 1953 coronation.

For a moment I thought it was also the same crown that sat on Gan-Gan's coffin as it went through the streets. It looked the same, but someone pointed out several key differences.

Ah, yes. So this was Granny's crown, and hers alone, and now I remembered her telling me how unbelievably heavy it had been the first time they set it upon her head.

It looked heavy. It also looked magical. The more we stared, the brighter it got—was that possible? And the glow was seemingly internal. The jewels did their part, but the crown seemed to possess some inner energy source, something beyond the sum of its parts, its jeweled band, its golden fleurs-de-lis, its

crisscrossing arches and gleaming cross. And of course its ermine base. You couldn't help but feel that a ghost, encountered late at night inside the Tower, might have a similar glow. I moved my eyes slowly, appreciatively, from the bottom to the top. The crown was a wonder, a transcendent and evocative piece of art, not unlike the poppies, but all I could think in that moment was how tragic that it should remain locked up in this Tower.

Yet another prisoner.

Seems a waste, I said to Willy and Kate, to which, I recall, they said nothing.

Maybe they were looking at that band of ermine, remembering my wedding remarks.

Maybe not.

76.

A FEW WEEKS LATER, after more than a year of talking and planning, thinking and worrying, seven thousand fans packed into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park for the opening ceremony. The Invictus Games were born.

It had been decided that the International Warrior Games was a tongue twister, a mouthful. A clever Royal Marine had then come up with this far better alternative.

As soon as he suggested it we all said: Of course! After the William Ernest Henley poem!

Every Brit knew that poem. Many had the first line by heart.

Out of the night that covers me . . .

And what schoolboy or schoolgirl didn't encounter at least once those sonorous final lines?

*I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

Minutes before my speech at the opening ceremony, I stood in the wings, holding notecards in my hands, which were visibly shaking. Before me, the podium looked like a gallows. I read my cards over and over, while nine Red Arrows did a flypast, streaming smoke colored red, white and blue. Then Idris Elba read "Invictus," maybe as well as anyone ever has, and then Michelle

Obama, via satellite, said some eloquent words about the meaning of the games. Finally, she introduced me.

Long walk. Through a red-carpeted labyrinth. My cheeks looked red-carpeted as well. My smile was frozen, the fight-or-flight response in full effect. I scolded myself under my breath for being this way. These games were celebrating men and women who'd lost limbs, pushed their bodies to the limit and beyond, and here I was freaking out about a little speech.

But it wasn't my fault. Anxiety, by this point, was controlling my body, my life. And this speech, which I believed meant so much to so many, couldn't help but exacerbate my condition.

Plus, the producer told me as I walked onstage that we were running behind on time. *Ah, great, something else to think about. Thanks.*

As I reached the lectern, which I'd personally and carefully positioned, I berated myself, because it afforded a perfect view of all the competitors. All those trusting, wholesome, expectant faces—counting on me. I forced myself to look away, to look at nothing. Hurrying, hyper-conscious of the clock, I bleated out: *For some of those taking part this will be a stepping-stone to elite sport. But for others it will mark the end of a chapter in their recovery and the beginning of a new one.*

I went and found my seat, down front, beside Pa, who put a hand on my shoulder. *Well done, darling boy.* He was being kind. He knew I'd rushed the speech. For once I was glad not to hear the raw truth from him.

Just on the numbers, Invictus was a hit. Two million people watched on TV, thousands filled the arenas for each event. Among the highlights, for me, was the wheelchair rugby final, Britain versus America, thousands of fans cheering Britain on to victory in the Copper Box.

Wherever I went that week, people came up to me, shook my hand, told me their stories. Children, parents, grandparents, always with tears in their eyes, told me that these games had restored something they'd feared forever lost: the true spirit of a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a mum, a dad. One woman tapped me on the shoulder and told me I'd resurrected her husband's smile.

Oh, that smile, she said. I hadn't seen it since he got injured.

I knew Invictus would do some good in the world, I always *knew*, but I was caught off guard by this wave of appreciation and gratitude. And joy.

Then came the emails. Thousands, each more moving than the last.

I've had a broken back for five years, but after watching these brave men and women I've got off the sofa today and I'm ready to begin again.

I've been suffering depression since returning from Afghanistan but this demonstration of human courage and resilience has made me see . . .

At the closing ceremony, moments after I introduced Dave Grohl and the Foo Fighters, a man and woman approached, their young daughter between them. The daughter was wearing a pink hoodie and orange ear defenders. She looked up at me: *Thank you for making my daddy . . . Daddy again.*

He'd won a gold medal.

Just one problem, she said. She couldn't see the Foo Fighters.

Ah well, we can't have that!

I lifted her onto my shoulders and together the four of us watched, danced, sang, and celebrated being alive.

It was my thirtieth birthday.

77.

SHORTLY AFTER THE GAMES I informed the Palace that I'd be leaving the Army. Elf and I worked on the public announcement; it was hard to get the wording just right, to explain it to the public, maybe because I was having trouble explaining it to myself. In hindsight I see that it was a hard decision to explain because it wasn't a decision at all. It was just time.

But time for what, exactly, besides leaving the Army? From now on I'd be something I'd never been: a full-time royal.

How would I even do that?

And was that what I wanted to be?

In a lifetime of existential crises, this was a bugger. Who are you when you can no longer be the thing you've always been, the thing you've trained to be?

Then one day I thought I glimpsed the answer.

It was a crisp Tuesday, near the Tower of London. I was standing in the middle of the street and suddenly here he came, yomping down the road— young Ben, the soldier with whom I'd flown back from Afghanistan in 2008, the soldier I'd visited and cheered as he climbed a wall with his new prosthetic leg. Six years after that flight, as promised, he was running a marathon. Not the London marathon, which would've been miraculous on its own. He was running *his own marathon*, along a route he'd designed himself, in the outline of a poppy laid over the city of London.

A staggering thirty-one miles, he'd done the full circuit to raise money and awareness—and heart rates.

I'm in shock, he said on finding me there.

You're in shock? I said. *That makes two of us.*

Seeing him out there, still being a soldier, despite no longer being a soldier—that was the answer to the riddle with which I'd been struggling so long.

Question: How do you stop being a soldier, when a soldier is all you've ever been or wanted to be?

Answer: You don't.

Even when you stop being a soldier, you don't have to stop being a soldier. Ever.

78.

AN AFGHANISTAN WAR SERVICE at St. Paul's Cathedral, and then a reception at the Guildhall hosted by the City of London Corporation, and then the launch of Walking With The Wounded's Walk Of Britain, and then a visit to England's rugby team, and then watching them practice for a match against France, and then following them to Twickenham and cheering them on, and then a memorial for the Olympian Richard Meade, the most successful equestrian in British history, and then a trip with Pa to Turkey to attend ceremonies marking the hundredth anniversary of Gallipoli, and then a meeting with descendants of the men who fought in that epic battle, and then back to London to hand out medals to runners at the London Marathon.

That was the start of my 2015.

Just the highlights.

The papers were awash with stories about Willy being lazy, and the press had taken to calling him "Work-shy Wills," which was obscene, grossly unfair, because he was busy having children and raising a family. (Kate was pregnant again.) Also, he was still beholden to Pa, who controlled the purse strings. He did as much as Pa wanted him to do, and sometimes that wasn't much, because Pa and Camilla didn't want Willy and Kate getting loads of publicity. Pa and Camilla didn't like Willy and Kate drawing attention away from them or their causes. They'd openly scolded Willy about it many times.

Case in point: Pa's press officer berated Willy's team when Kate was scheduled to visit a tennis club on the same day Pa was doing an engagement. Told

that it was too late to cancel the visit, Pa's press officer warned: *Just make sure the Duchess doesn't hold a tennis racquet in any of the photos!*

Such a winning, fetching photo would undoubtedly wipe Pa and Camilla off the front pages. And that, in the end, couldn't be tolerated.

Willy told me that both he and Kate felt trapped, and unfairly persecuted, by the press and by Pa and Camilla, so I felt some need to carry the banner for all three of us in 2015. But selfishly, I also didn't want the press coming for me. To be called lazy? I shuddered. I never wanted to see that word attached to my name. The press had called me stupid for most of my life, and naughty, and racist, but if they dared to call me lazy . . . I couldn't guarantee I wouldn't go down to Fleet Street and start pulling people out from behind their desks.

I didn't understand until months later that there were even more reasons why the press was gunning for Willy. First, he'd got them all worked up by ceasing to play their game, denying them unfettered access to his family. He'd refused several times to trot Kate out like a prized racehorse, and that was considered a bridge too far.

Then he'd had the temerity to go out and give a vaguely anti-Brexit speech, which really galled them. Brexit was their bread and butter. How dare he suggest it was bullshit.

79.

I WENT TO AUSTRALIA FOR a round of military exercises and while there I got word: Willy and Kate had welcomed their second child. Charlotte. I was an uncle again, and very happy about it.

But, predictably, during one interview that day or the next a journalist questioned me about it as though I'd received a terminal diagnosis.

No, mate. Thrilled to bits.

But you're further down the line of succession.

Couldn't be happier for Willy and Kate.

The journalist pressed: Fifth in line—hm. No longer even the Spare of the Spare.

I thought: First of all, it's a good thing to be farther from the center of a volcano. Second, what kind of monster would think of himself and his place in the line of succession at such a time, rather than welcoming a new life into the world?

I'd once heard a courtier say that when you were fifth or sixth in line you were "only a plane crash away." I couldn't imagine living that way.

The journalist persisted. Didn't the birth make me question my choices?
Choices?

Isn't it time you settled down?

Well, uh—

People are starting to compare you to Bridget Jones.

I thought: Are they really? Bridget Jones, ay?

The journalist waited.

It'll happen, I assured him, or her, I can't recall the face, only the preposterous line of questioning. *When, kind sir, do you plan to wive?* It will happen when it happens, I said, the way you'd assure a naggy auntie.

The faceless journalist stared with abject . . . pity.

Will it, though?

80.

PEOPLE OFTEN SPECULATED THAT I was clinging to my bachelor life because it was so glamorous. Many evenings I'd think: If only they could see me now.

Then I'd go back to folding my underwear and watching "The One with Monica and Chandler's Wedding."

Besides my own laundry (often laid out to dry on my radiators) I did my own chores, my own cooking, my own food shopping. There was a supermarket by the Palace and I went there, casually, at least once a week.

Of course I'd plan each trip as carefully as a patrol around Musa Qala. I'd arrive at different times, randomly, to throw off the press. I'd wear a disguise: low baseball cap, loose coat. I'd run along the aisles at warp speed, grabbing the salmon fillets I liked, the brand of yogurt I liked. (I'd memorized a map of the store.) Plus a few Granny Smith apples and bananas. And, of course, some crisps.

Then I'd sprint to the checkout.

Just as I'd honed my preflight checks in the Apache, I now honed my grocery shopping time down to ten minutes. But one night I got to the shop and began to run up and down the aisles and everything . . . had moved.

I hurried over to an employee: *What's happened?*

Excuse me?

Where is everything?

Where is—?

Why has everything moved?

Honestly?

Yes, honestly.

To keep people here longer. So they'll buy more stuff.

I was gobsmacked. You can do that? By law?

A bit panicky, I resumed running up and down the aisles, filling my trolley as best I could, keeping an eye on the clock, then rushed to the checkout. That was always the trickiest part, because there was no honing the checkout: it all depended on others. More, the checkout counter stood right beside the news racks, which held every British tabloid and magazine, and half the front pages and magazine covers were photos of my family. Or my mum. Or me.

More than once I watched customers read about me, overheard them debating me. In 2015 I overheard them frequently discussing whether or not I'd ever marry. Whether or not I was happy. Whether or not I might be gay. I was always tempted to tap them on the shoulder . . . *Ello*.

One night, in disguise, watching some people discuss me and my life choices, I became aware of raised voices at the front of the queue. An older married couple, abusing the cashier. It was unpleasant at first, then intolerable.

I stepped forward, showed my face, cleared my throat: *Excuse me. Not sure what's going on here, but I don't think you should be speaking to her like that.*

The cashier was on the verge of tears. The couple abusing her turned and recognized me. They weren't in the least surprised, however. Just offended to be called out on their abuse.

When they left, when it came my turn to pay, the cashier tried to thank me as she bagged my avocados. I wouldn't hear of it. I told her to hang in there, scooped up my things and ran, like the Green Hornet.

Shopping for clothes was so much less complicated.

As a rule I didn't think about clothing. I didn't fundamentally believe in fashion, and I couldn't understand why anybody would. I often got mocked on social media for my mismatched outfits, my ratty shoes. Writers would flag a photo of me and wonder why my trousers were so long, my shirts so crumpled. (They didn't dream that I'd dried them on the radiator.)

Not very princely, they'd say.

Right you are, I'd think.

My father tried. He gave me an absolutely gorgeous pair of black brogues. Works of art. Weighed as much as bowling balls. I wore them until the soles developed holes, and when I was mocked for wearing holey shoes I finally got them fixed.

Each year I received from Pa an official clothing allowance, but that was strictly for formal wear. Suits and ties, ceremonial outfits. For my everyday casual clothes I'd go to T.K. Maxx, the discount store. I was particularly fond of their once-a-year sale, when they'd be flush with items from Gap or J.Crew, items that had just gone out of season or were slightly damaged. If you timed it just right, got there on the first day of the sale, you could snag the same clothes that others were paying top prices for down the high street! With two hundred quid you could look like a fashion plate.

Here, too, I had a system. Get to the shop fifteen minutes before closing time. Grab a red bucket. Hurry to the top floor. Begin systematically working up one rack and down another.

If I found something promising I'd hold it up to my chest or legs, standing in front of a mirror. I never dawdled over color or style and certainly never went anywhere near a changing room. If it looked nice, comfortable, into the bucket it went. If I was on the fence about it, I'd ask Billy the Rock. He delighted in moonlighting as my stylist.

At closing time we'd run out with two giant shopping bags, feeling triumphant. Now the papers wouldn't call me a slob. At least for a little while.

Far better, I wouldn't have to think about clothes again for another six months.

81.

OTHER THAN THE occasional shopping, I stopped going out in 2015. Stopped entirely.

No more occasional dinners with mates. No more house parties. No clubs. No nothing.

Every night I'd go straight home from work, eat over the sink, then catch up on paperwork, *Friends* on low in the background.

Pa's chef would sometimes stock my freezer with chicken pies, cottage pies. I was grateful not to have to venture to the supermarket quite as much...

though the pies sometimes put me in mind of the Gurkhas and their goat stew, mainly because they were so unspicy. I missed the Gurkhas, missed the Army. I missed the war.

After dinner I'd smoke a joint, trying to make sure the smoke didn't waft into the garden of my neighbor, The Duke of Kent.

Then I'd turn in early.

Solitary life. Strange life. I felt lonely, but lonely was better than panicky. I was just beginning to discover a few healthy remedies to my panic, but until I felt surer of them, until I felt on more solid ground, I was leaning on this one decidedly unhealthy remedy.

Avoidance.

I was an agoraphobe.

Which was nearly impossible given my public role.

After one speech, which couldn't be avoided or canceled, and during which I'd nearly fainted, Willy came up to me backstage. Laughing.

Harold! Look at you! You're drenched.

I couldn't fathom his reaction. Him of all people. He'd been present for my very first panic attack. With Kate. We were driving out to a polo match in Gloucestershire, in their Range Rover. I was in the back and Willy peered at me in the rearview. He saw me sweating, red-faced. *You all right, Harold?* No, I wasn't. It was a trip of several hours and every few miles I wanted to ask him to pull over so I could jump out and try to catch my breath.

He knew something was up, something bad. He'd told me that day or soon after that I needed help. And now he was teasing me? I couldn't imagine how he could be so insensitive.

But I was at fault too. Both of us should've known better, should've recognized my crumbling emotional and mental states for what they were, because we'd just started to discuss the launching of a public campaign to raise awareness around mental health.

82.

I WENT TO EAST LONDON, to Mildmay Mission Hospital, to commemorate its 150th anniversary and recent renovations. My mother once paid the place a famous visit. She held the hand of a man who was HIV-positive, and thereby changed the world. She proved that HIV wasn't leprosy, that it wasn't

a curse. She proved that the disease didn't disqualify people from love or dignity. She reminded the world that respect and compassion aren't gifts, they're the least we owe each other.

I learned that her famous visit had actually been one of many. A Mildmay worker pulled me aside, told me that Mummy would slip in and out of the hospital all the time. No fanfare, no photos. She'd just drop in, make a few people feel better, then run home.

Another woman told me she'd been a patient during one of those pop-ins. Born HIV-positive, this woman remembered sitting on Mummy's lap. She was only two at the time, but she remembered.

I cuddled her. Your mum. I did.

My face flushed. I felt such envy.

Did you?

I did, I did, and oh, it was so nice. She gave a great cuddle!

Yes, I remember.

But I didn't.

No matter how I tried, I barely remembered a thing.