

# The parable of Diana

**P**RINCESS Diana died four years ago this week, a legend in her own time.

Two billion people are estimated to have watched her funeral in an unprecedented worldwide expression of grief.

Yet 16 years earlier a billion people watched her fairytale wedding to Prince Charles. Like a fairytale, Diana's journey has universal lessons.

At first the Diana legend resembled a modern version of Cinderella.

She was a shy, kind, romantic kindergarten teacher, whose heartfelt goodness and love were discovered by the prince who married her. The whole land (through the media the whole world) adored her.

**B**UT the fairytale went wrong. As Diana said, "Being a princess isn't all it's cracked up to be."

In reality, she had gone from one family in which she was deprived of love to another.

In her own family, Diana started life in a strained marriage and as a disappointment to her father. He wanted her to be a son and heir after the death of his first son and birth of two daughters.

He did eventually have a son after Diana, but her parents' marriage failed when Diana was six.

Diana took a maternal role to her younger brother Charles. Care for those more vulnerable than herself and a romantic nature had kept Diana going.

On his part, Prince Charles came from an emotionally aloof family. He was denied the woman he loved, and was pushed to produce suitable heirs.

When he met Diana, Charles talked of his grief for his assassinated uncle, the one person who had given him love.

Diana responded, "You looked so sad when you walked up the aisle at the funeral. My heart bled for you. I thought, 'It's wrong, you are lonely, you should be with somebody to look after you.'"

She was ready to care for Charles. And perhaps the 19-year-old romantic hoped that the prince, 13 years her elder, would care for her.

The dreams shattered in all too common domestic disillusionments. For her, he was unemotional, spent his time with superficial friends and sport.

For him, she was emotional, demanding and manipulative.

He resumed his previous affair. She became depressed, anorexic, bulimic, self-mutilating, and suicidal. Elev-



**Diana:** a Cinderella.

en years after marriage the couple separated.

Amazingly, Diana engaged the public in an even bigger love affair — with them.

She declared herself Princess of the People, the Queen of Hearts. She would care for everyone.

She said, "I understand people's suffering, people's pain." And, "I think the biggest disease the world suffers from in this day and age is the disease of people feeling unloved. I know that I can give love."

She held the hand of an AIDS sufferer when the disease was still abhorred like the plague. She held AIDS babies, dying babies. She supported many charities and the drive against land mines.

Her genuine and endearing kindness and shyness, mixed with a photogenic innocent beauty, evoked an admiring love for her.

Millions felt personally touched.

So millions felt the tragedy of her untimely and meaningless death, as if love had died. Even the manner of her death in a car crash was inglorious.

And that her partner in death was a playboy, indicated that her relationships were still problematic.

Even so, Diana's journey has important lessons. She reflects the changing ideals of women from wanting to marry prince charmings to being their own fulfilled persons.

Diana also teaches that lack of early care and love, the building blocks to such fulfilment (for males as well as females), cannot be retrieved by princes and princesses, worldwide adoration, or even an overflowing love of the world.

The lacks have to be accepted and grieved for love to move on.

That lesson is Diana's true gift to the world. The hype, media and glitz were just the modern vehicles for the fairytale.

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