

Only a whisper away



Diana Dors and Alan Lake were married at Caxton Hall in London

Diana Dors' third husband Alan Lake may have been her soulmate, but his alcoholism would be a real test of her love, reveals Steve O'Brien

Anyone watching ITV's *This is Your Life* on October 27, 1982 would have been in no doubt as to how much in love Diana Dors was as she beamed at the man, nine years her junior, sitting beside her on stage. "One of your television appearances," host Eamonn Andrews explained at the beginning of the show, "was opposite this leading man 14 years ago and he's been your leading man ever since, your husband Alan Lake!"

For anyone who'd followed the story of 'the British Marilyn Monroe' since she broke through in the Fifties, it seemed like the happy ending that had so eluded her during her first two marriages. But there was little indication on the programme that night that Dors' latest husband was fighting a losing battle with a chronic drink problem. As the actress recalled to her friend, singer Billie Davis, shortly after hooking up with Lake, "I seem to have gone from a gambler to an alcoholic."

It was on the set of the 1968 series *The Inquisitors* that

Dors met the man who would become her third husband. Her previous marriage, to British-American actor Richard Dawson, had ended in divorce two years previously with Dawson gaining custody of both their sons. Things were looking bleak professionally for Dors too. Now in her late 30s and with an expanding waistline, this one-time pin-up was finding movie roles harder to come by and had been reduced to performing at, as she worded it, "all the worst working men's clubs in the country". In June 1968, she revealed that she owed £48,000 to the Inland Revenue, declaring herself bankrupt just a few months later.

HARD PARTYING

"At least no one can say I'm marrying her for her money," Lake would say when he tied the knot with Diana Dors on November 23, 1968. They'd met less than two months previously and the attraction had been so immediate that Lake had given the actress an antique Mexican ring bequeathed to him by his uncle "on the understanding", the actor explained, "that I would promise to give it to the first girl I saw that I was going to get married to."

"I don't think I was thinking about his uncle at the time," Dors recalled to Eamonn Andrews, "I was too interested in him!"

Sentimental Lake might have been, but he was also wild and

unpredictable, a hard-drinking party animal who could barely cope without his new wife by his side. The singer P.J. Proby would recall that Lake's dependence on his new wife was so great, he wouldn't accept acting jobs unless Dors was able to be there with him on set.

Lake's dependence on her Dors could cope with, but his addiction to alcohol would prove more destructive. "He was an alcoholic, out of control," their friend the actor Andrew Ray recalled. "I remember going to the theatre with them sometimes and if I was going up to order the drinks he'd say to me, 'When you get a vodka, put four in for me!' And this is the last thing she wanted, especially when they had Jason."

Their son Jason Dors Lake was born on September 11, 1969, though his birth did little to slow down Lake's escalating alcoholism. "He was very wild when he was drinking," Jason would recall in the documentary *The Unforgettable Diana Dors*, "to the point where sometimes we had to leave the house."

Through the Seventies, Lake would attempt to kick the habit various times, to little avail. Then, in 1982, he discovered that his beloved wife had ovarian cancer, a disease that would finally claim her two years later, on May 4, 1984. Lake was bereft.



Diana and Jason with Alan on his release from prison in 1971 after he'd served time for his part in a pub brawl

The next few months would be torture for Lake and, though friends urged him to sell the house in Berkshire that he'd shared with Dors, he refused to leave or even redecorate. "I think," said Andrew Ray, "surrounded by the memories of Diana and perhaps filled with the guilt that he had about how he'd been in the early part of the relationship, he couldn't live with himself any longer."

TOGETHER FOREVER

On October 10, 1984, Lake took their teenage son Jason to the local railway station, returned home and shot himself. He was 43 years old.

Alan Lake would be laid to rest next to Dors, with the inscription on his gravestone reading 'Together Forever - only a whisper away'. At the time of her death, they'd been married 16 years and, though their fights would put Burton and Taylor to shame, few of their friends would deny that Alan Lake and Diana Dors were, through the rough and the smooth, soulmates and that the actress had, in her late 30s, finally met the love of her life.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tragically, Dors and Lake's only son Jason died in 2019, from the combined effects of alcohol and tramadol intoxication.