



**£5 OFF
AT B&Q**
When you spend £25
See Page 94 TERMS APPLY



ROYAL EXCLUSIVE

Charles: My marriage was a Greek tragedy

**THE ASTONISHING HAND-WRITTEN LETTERS OF A PRINCE IN
ANGUISH THAT LAY HIDDEN FOR 35 YEARS... UNTIL NOW** Pages 4, 5, 6, 7

MAY GOES NUCLEAR

● PM rips into Corbyn over 'chilling' refusal to defend UK with Trident
● Shock poll as Tory lead cut to 1 per cent with just 4 days to go

By **Simon Walters** and **Glen Owen**

BRITAIN will become the 'laughing stock of the world' if Jeremy Corbyn wins Thursday's General Election, Theresa May warns today.

She denounces the Labour leader's 'chilling' refusal to say that he would defend Britain against a nuclear attack and

Turn to Page 2 >>

Charles: the whole story is so awful that very few would believe it

THE letter was heartbreaking in its simplicity.

Tormented by the very public breakdown of his marriage to Princess Diana, a sombre Prince Charles picked up his fountain pen and poured his emotions on to the page: 'No one can really understand what it all means until it happens to you, which is why it all keeps getting worse and worse. One day I will tell you the whole story. It is a kind of Greek tragedy and would certainly make a very good play!'

For a man forced to maintain a stiff upper lip in public, it was a rare release of privately-held anguish to a loyal and trusted friend, one who truly understood how it felt to be vilified on the world stage. The letter, dated June 21, 1992, was addressed to 'My Dear Nancy', better known as former

Queen Mother's death 'left an enormous chasm'

US First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Today The Mail on Sunday can reveal the astonishing personal letters between Prince Charles and the Reagans, which formed the backbone of a friendship spanning four decades that ended only with the death of Mrs Reagan at the age of 94 last year.

At a time when Princes William and Harry have chosen to campaign for mental health issues – and this week spoke openly for the first time about their mother's death 20 years ago – the never-before-seen letters from their father to his trusted friends across the Atlantic take on a particular poignancy by

ROYAL EXCLUSIVE

From **Caroline Graham and Daniel Bates** IN LOS ANGELES

showing how Charles, too, suffered emotional turmoil and sought private solace and reassurance.

The extraordinary letters also reveal for the first time how Charles was:

- Distracted at his 'Greek tragedy' of a marriage: 'It is so awful... very few people would believe it';
- Disgusted at cruel claims about the First Lady: 'We live in an increasingly uncivilised world. I know exactly the methods these dreadful people employ to create the maximum amount of controversy... so as to make the maximum amount of money';
- Heartbroken over the death of the Queen Mother: 'I have dreaded her eventual departure... she leaves an enormous chasm in my life';
- Besotted by Nancy's charm, telling a friend: 'I wanted to kiss her';
- Plagued by fears of a rash of criticism on his tenth wedding anniversary: 'There are a whole series of ghastly books coming out... you can imagine what they will contain.'

The letters vary in tone and con-



HIDEAWAY: Prince Charles writing a letter in Highgrove in 1986

text and are written in the Prince's trademark black ink on crested notepaper from various homes including Highgrove, Sandringham, Birkhall – his hunting lodge in the grounds of Balmoral – and the British Embassy in Washington.

One is even written at 35,000ft as the Prince flies home from a whirlwind tour of the US. He captions it in the left-hand corner 'Airborne between Washington and the UK.'

There is even a small idiosyncrasy, a princely form of shorthand, in which a dot above a short horizontal line stands for the word 'in'.

His emotions veer from elation and pride – clearly besotted Charles

“It is a kind of Greek tragedy and would certainly make a very good play”

Tormented by the public breakdown of his marriage, Prince Charles pours out his heart in a letter written from his Highgrove 'sanctuary' on June 21, 1992, days after Andrew Morton's book *Diana: Her True Story* portrays him as a cruel and callous husband.

'A GREEK TRAGEDY': IN HIS OWN HAND, PRINCE SHARES ANGUISH OF HIS BREAK-UP FROM DIANA... IN INTIMATE LETTERS TO NANCY REAGAN



One day I will tell you the whole story. My problem is that it is so awful & so extraordinary that very few people who haven't been witnesses would believe it. It's a kind of Greek tragedy and would certainly make a very good play!



“Diana still hasn't got over dancing with John Travolta”

Diana still hasn't got over dancing with John Travolta, Neil Diamond and Clint Eastwood in one evening, not to mention the Presidents of the United States as well!

Smitten Charles writes with ill-concealed pride about his wife's dazzling dance with her idol John Travolta at the White House in November 1985, which became an iconic image.

NANCY REAGAN THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY



“I know exactly the methods these dreadful people employ”

Charles comforts Nancy after Kitty Kelley's 'appalling' exposé, left, in April 1991 and, in words reproduced right, fears a raft of 'ghastly books' for his tenth wedding anniversary. Morton's book, far right, came out in 1992

Apparently there are a whole series of ghastly books coming out in time with our 10th wedding anniversary – so you can imagine what they will contain!



of their lives and always wrote the other with strong words of personal support, especially if the situation had become public.

'Mrs Reagan was extremely touched that he attended President Reagan's funeral in 2004. She felt a special closeness to him.'

Charles first met the Reagans in 1974 when he was serving in the Royal Navy and was invited to a private dinner at the Palm Springs home of Walter Annenberg, then US ambassador to Britain, and his socialite wife Lee, a lifelong confidante of Nancy's.

At the time, Reagan was Governor of California and their lasting

friendship began at a raucous weekend at the Annenberg's sprawling 25,000sq ft home in the desert, where Charles also met Hollywood luminaries including Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope.

In a letter dated June 6, 2004, the day after President Reagan's death following a decade-long battle with Alzheimer's, the Prince wrote a condolence note to Nancy from Highgrove in which he recalls 'such fond and happy memories of those California days when we used to meet with the dear old Annenbergs.'

Clearly moved by Reagan's death, he continues: 'I so wanted to write to say how much my heart goes out

to you. I have minded so much for you ever since your husband became ill with that beastly Alzheimer's as I can well imagine how soul-destroying it must be to be unable to do anything to help as the illness gradually drags your loved one into a separate world from which you are barred...'

The Prince recalls: 'Your husband was always incredibly kind to me and none more so than when we came to stay with you both in the White House in the 80s and you made us feel so marvellously welcome... I shall treasure his sense of humour which shone through every-

thing he did. It was a rare gift and he put it to wonderful use.'

The friendship deepened when Reagan became President in 1981.

In May 1981, Prince Charles, engaged to Lady Diana Spencer and preparing for their wedding that July, flew to Washington for a three-day solo state visit.

On May 3, airborne, he writes to thank the Reagans for hosting a dinner at the White House the night before. President Reagan had been shot by John Hinckley on March 30 and Charles wrote how 'honoured' he was that 'you should have found time to see me on Friday – particu-

larly after all you have been through recently!'

The Prince gushed about sitting next to Nancy – 'I am a devoted admirer for life!' – and seemed thrilled to have had a pudding, Crown of Sorbet Prince of Wales, named after him: 'What more could anyone want than an enjoyable visit to Washington and a special culinary creation named after you!'

In another letter to Mrs Reagan, Lady (Mary) Henderson, wife of Sir Nicholas Henderson, then UK Ambassador to Washington, wrote of an exchange after the same

It's not been very easy to cope of late

THE TERRIBLE LOSS OF HIS 'BELOVED' GRANDMOTHER... AND A HOAXER UNMASKED

From Page 5

dinner: 'The Prince said: "I have fallen in love with Mrs Reagan - she is wonderful" to which I said: "Well Sir, I told you so." The Prince then added: "I wanted to kiss her - to thank her..." Nick: "Well, why didn't you?" The Prince: "Well... you know... we British... are..."'

While much has been written about the breakdown of Charles's marriage to Diana, one letter written on November 11, 1985, bursts with love and pride. The couple had enjoyed a hugely successful trip to the States, crowned by a glittering gala at the White House in which Nancy arranged for Diana to dance with her 'idol', Saturday Night Fever star John Travolta.

While that has become an iconic image of the late Princess, her husband's account of that night has never before been made public.

In the letter to President Reagan, Charles speaks about the 'wonderfully relaxed' visit and how he would be 'watching with interest to see how your meeting with the Soviet president goes...' (Reagan was about to have his historic summit with Mikhail Gorbachev).

Proudly, he writes: 'Diana still hasn't got over dancing with John Travolta, Neil Diamond and Clint

'We live in an increasingly uncivilised world'

Eastwood in one evening not to mention the President of the United States as well!

Ever the loyal friend, one of the most telling letters is clearly written in haste from Birkhall, the Prince's shooting lodge at Balmoral on April 11, 1991.

Four days earlier, an unauthorised warts-and-all biography of Mrs Reagan by American author Kitty Kelley had been reviewed by the New York Times.

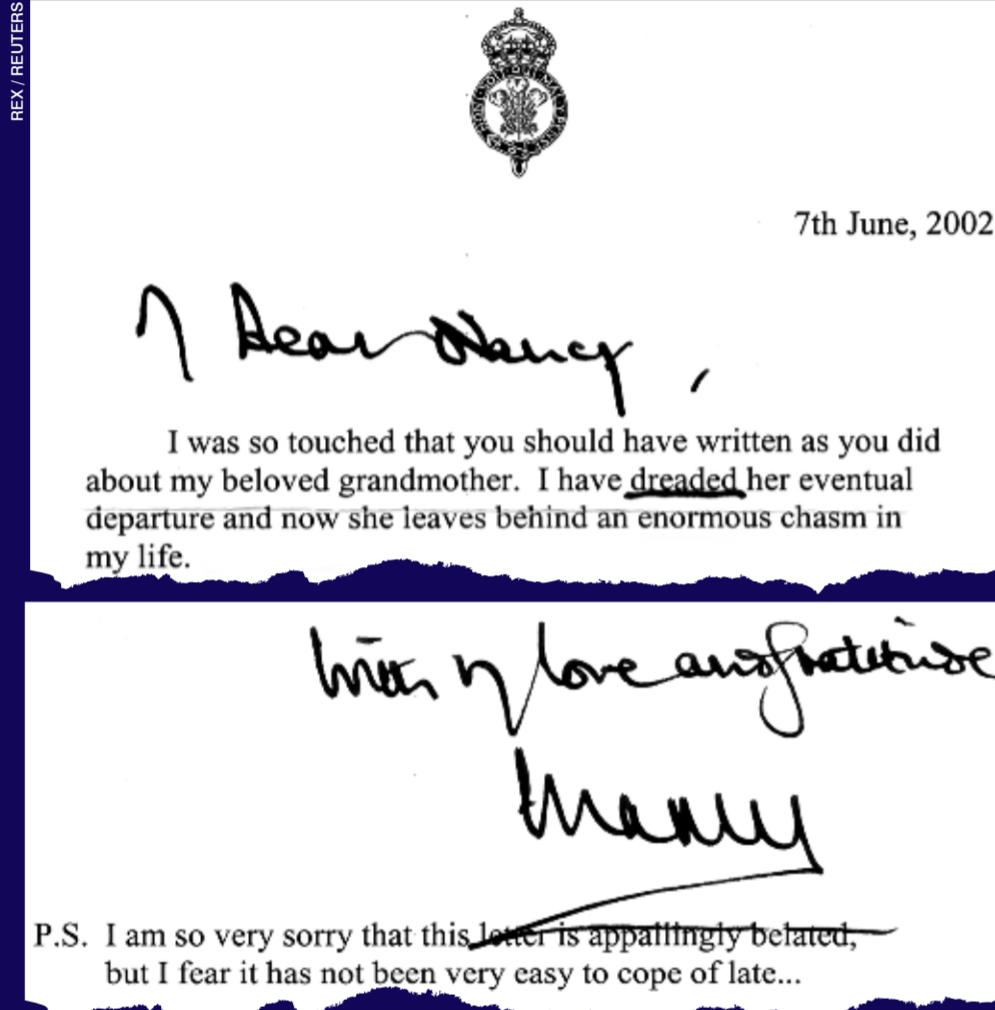
The devastating exposé was full of salacious gossip including allegations Nancy had an affair with Frank Sinatra, had undergone plastic surgery multiple times, lied about her age and advised her husband on affairs of state only after consulting astrologers.

Scathing in its tone, the book portrayed Nancy as an ice-cold gold-digger who used the casting couch to sleep her way around Hollywood and had set out to 'trap' Ronald by getting pregnant.

A clearly enraged Charles writes to his friend about the 'appalling book', saying 'I know exactly the methods these dreadful people employ to create the maximum amount of controversy and conflict by making the wildest allegations so as to make the maximum amount of money. We live in an increasingly uncivilised world and if you happen to find yourself in a public position it becomes progressively more impossible to operate without every move being regarded as having an ulterior motive.'

He urges his friend to ignore the media stories and says he has taken to 'reading literary classics' as he feels sure 'I shall become wiser + more knowledgeable that way.'

The following year, in 1992, Nancy writes to Charles after the publication of Andrew Morton's Diana:



BESOTTED: Charles and Nancy dancing in May 1981, when he was bowled over by her charm



“So enjoyable! I am a devoted admirer for life”

Airborne between Washington and UK

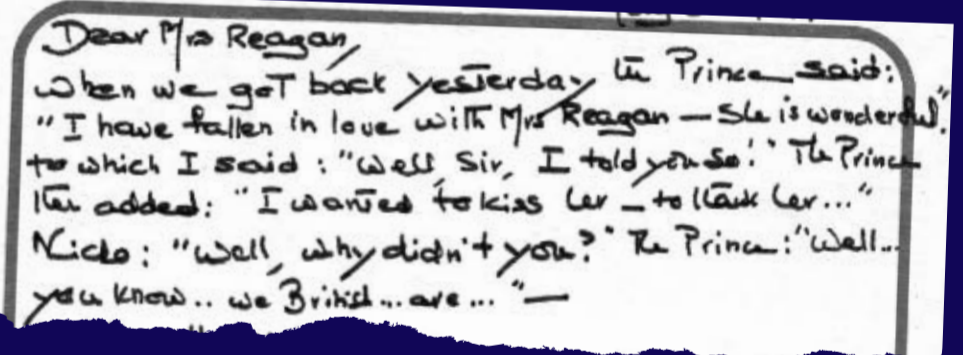


May 3rd 1981

Dear Mr President and Mrs Reagan

I was equally honoured to have the chance of sitting next to the First Lady and having such an enjoyable conversation with her. I am a devoted admirer for life!

After sitting next to Nancy at a White House function in May 1981, the besotted Prince gushes over the 'enjoyable conversation' they shared and says, in fulsome praise reproduced above and written at 35,000ft: 'I am a devoted admirer for life!'



“The prince said 'I wanted to kiss her - to thank her'”

Lady Henderson, the wife of the then British Ambassador to the US, wrote to Nancy after the same dinner, recounting how Charles longed to kiss the First Lady but refrained... because of his repressed British sensibilities.

ALL LETTERS COURTESY OF THE RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION AND LIBRARY



BEREFT: Charles at the April 2002 funeral of his 'beloved grandmother'

Her True Story which the Princess secretly co-operated with. The book exposed Diana's fears about Camilla Parker Bowles' relationship with her husband (even though the Prince later insisted the affair only started after his marriage had 'irretrievably broken down') and portrayed the Prince as a cold, uncaring husband. The book was published on June 15, 1992, and the Prince writes to Nancy six days later after receiving her letter of support and tells her of his 'Greek tragedy' of a marriage saying: 'I can't tell you how much your heartwarming letter mean to me. As you say, no one can really understand what it all means until it has happened to you' and promising 'one day I will tell you the whole story' but that it is 'so awful that

very few people who haven't been witnesses would believe it.' On November 24, 1994, a clearly furious Charles confides in President Reagan in a typed note from Sandringham that a radio station 'prank called' him for his birthday: 'I was ...told that a member of your staff was on the line and when I picked up the telephone a strange voice wished me a happy birthday. I slammed down the receiver in a rage as you can imagine!' It is not known which station was involved. On July 18, 1996, in a four-page letter written during a visit to New York, Charles laments that he has not seen Mrs Reagan, who was caring for her husband at their LA home: 'I do feel for you so much and pray that the President's condi-

tion isn't making life too complicated for you,' he wrote. In frustration he complains he is being forced to go to 'yet another' dinner, this time to raise funds for Henry VIII's warship The Mary **'Oh, how we shall miss her and all she stood for'** Rose which he helped raise in 1982. 'Now they inevitably need more funds to keep going. It's the bane of my life!' he grumbles. The most poignant note is a black-rimmed letter dated June 7, 2002, about the death of the Queen Mother on March 30, in which he admitted: 'I fear it has not been

“I have dreaded her eventual departure”

A heartbroken Charles confides that he dreaded the death of his grandmother, underlining the word on his typewritten letter of June 2002 in which he opened up about his pain, saying the Queen Mother's death 'leaves behind an enormous chasm in my life' but also 'the most wonderful legacy of unbelievably happy memories.'

“I slammed the receiver down in a rage, as you can imagine!”

I was later told that a member of your staff was on the line and when I picked up the telephone a strange voice wished me a happy birthday and asked if I'd been in the garden. I became suspicious and asked him who he was. There was a pause and then he said he was calling on behalf of a radio station! I slammed down the receiver in a rage, as you can imagine!

A livid Prince recounts how he realised he had fallen victim to a prank call from an unknown radio station on his birthday in a letter to President Reagan typewritten in November 1994

These are the missives of a caring Prince

THE Prince of Wales agonises over what he writes, whether it is for public consumption or private and personal. He chooses every word carefully. Charles knows that, after more than half a century as a player on the world stage, his words will matter. Yet for all the considerable care he takes, it is wrong to pigeonhole him as a man of retrained emotion, a cold fish. Some critics have completely missed his passion, his warmth and his humour - all evident in

ANALYSIS



these extraordinary letters to America's former First Lady, Nancy Reagan. Here is a very different side of the future King, at times

anguished, funny, supportive, loving. The correspondence shows, for example, how Charles reached out for help during the darkest days when his marriage to Diana was collapsing. He is clearly devastated, not only for his and Diana's sake, but for that of his children, the country and the institution of Monarchy, too. It is clear to me - as a correspondent who covered the story of the breakdown at the time - that his remarks are laden in genuine sorrow. They show

a sensitive side to him, strong rather than self-pitying. And at times these letters are heartbreaking, especially when he addresses the death of his grandmother, the Queen Mother. He is, after all, a deep-thinking man who cares profoundly about issues, and perhaps more importantly, people. He will always have the good of his future subjects at heart. While his sons, Princes William and Harry, have been rightly praised for wearing their hearts

on their sleeves, discussing their own mental health and dropping the stiff-upper-lip attitude so often associated with the Royal Family, there is no monopoly on openness or empathy. As these letters show, their father was there first. Too easily dismissed by many, in this respect at least, Charles has been ahead of his time - although, yes, he is a traditional man, a man of his generation. Even in today's world of texts and emails, a handwritten letter is, to him, still the natural choice.