



As a child of the 1980s and an American, I never gave much thought to the Monarchy other than to think of it as some kind of country-specific “fun fact”—the Greeks had gods and goddesses, the Swiss had clocks, and the British had kings and queens.

But all of that began to change in the 1990s when the goings-on of The Royal Family went from historical footnote to tabloid fodder. Suddenly, Prince William was on the cover of my Bop magazine, and “revenge dress” had entered the global lexicon. An institution that once felt removed, protected, and even mythological now felt profoundly human—“Royals: They’re Just Like Us.”

I have such a distinct memory of my mother crying watching the news of Princess Diana’s death that I remember wondering if perhaps she knew her. Which, of course, she didn’t. But also, maybe we did. That’s the thing with public figures; they are simultaneously knowable and unknowable. The collective fascination with the Royal Family and its iconic figurehead, Queen Elizabeth, stems from this very juggernaut.

Queen Elizabeth’s reign was so long, so omnipresent, and so intricately tied to the majority of the twentieth and early twenty-first century that for many people, myself included, it felt like we knew her. Or perhaps, more accurately, we “knew” the parts of her that best reflected our own lived experiences: the wife, or the daughter, or the mother, or the grandmother, or the young and not-so-young woman working to have her opinions taken seriously in rooms dominated by men. We get to do this because of what parts of the Queen she showed us and what parts she chose to withhold.

But is it possible to be both a symbol and a person? A postage stamp and a grandmother? And if it is, does that duality take a toll?

We will never know what really happened behind the closed doors of the Audience room, between the Sovereign and her Prime Ministers, but it has been a delight to imagine.

We hope you enjoy the glimpse inside....

Jessica Fisch, Director, *The Audience*



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