



Who was the real Grace Kelly?

Flawless princess or fractured heroine? A new film about Grace Kelly suggests that Andrew Wilson on her battles with Rainier, her dreams

the fairytale was just that – and that behind the façade was a woman in turmoil. of escape and why her legacy still reverberates today



HE YEAR IS 1962. THE ROYAL FAMILY OF THE HOUSE OF GRIMALDI IS HAVING AN INFORMAL LUNCH, A BARBECUE ON A TERRACE OF THEIR 235-ROOM PINK PALACE OVERLOOKING THE GLITTERING MEDITERRANEAN SEA. BUT THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE TABLE IS FAR FROM SUNNY.

Her Serene Highness Princess Grace of Monaco, the Hollywood actress turned princess, the woman considered by most of the world to be its most exquisite, most elegant, most perfect inhabitant, is in a state of high anxiety. Nothing she says or does seems to make her husband, Prince Rainier III, or the extended royal family, happy. First, she is criticized for decorating the table with white lilies, flowers 'only to be used for funerals'. Then Rainier, in a foul mood because of an ongoing political crisis with France's President Charles de Gaulle, turns on his wife of six years and mocks her chic new hairstyle, an 'artichoke' look designed by Alexandre de Paris. 'It looks dreadful,' he says. 'It yells of disrespect.'

The row escalates. Rainier attacks his wife for her decision to return to acting—she had recently been offered nearly \$800,000 by Alfred Hitchcock to star in *Marnie*. Rainier orders her to announce that she will soon retire from the profession. Grace keeps her composure until she can maintain it no longer, then turns on her husband, accusing him of being politically inept: 'Maybe you shouldn't ask who would want to be an enemy of Monaco, but look in the mirror and figure out why.' Rainier, enraged, dashes his glass to the ground and leaves the table.

The scene is taken from the new film *Grace of Monaco*, with Nicole Kidman in the title role, Tim Roth as Rainier, Robert Lindsay as Aristide Onassis, Paz Vega as his mistress Maria Callas and Parker Posey as Madge Tivey-Faoucon, Grace's lady-in-waiting. Although Prince Albert II, Monaco's current ruler, has already publicly distanced himself from the movie, believing it contains 'major historical untruths and a series of purely fictional scenes', *Grace of Monaco* is set to reignite a debate about the role and significance of one of the 20th century's most iconic women.

Since her death in 1982, after suffering a stroke while driving with her daughter Princess Stéphanie along a treacherous stretch of mountain road, directors, actors, fashion commentators, biographers and friends have tried to define her appeal. 'Her beauty was ethereal,' says society interior-designer Tessa Kennedy, who first met her in 1956. 'You couldn't stop looking at her.' Theatre director Don Richardson, one of her lovers, observed: 'The camera did more than love her. It was insane about her—just like I was.' In 1955, a leading magazine declared, 'The thing that made her stand out is what we call "style," and to this day her name is synonymous with sophistication. Indeed, the *Hermès sac à dépêches* she used to cover her baby bump when she was pregnant with her first child, Princess Caroline, is still known as the Kelly bag and remains one of the

most desirable in the world, with a waiting list of up to four years.

Cecil Beaton, who photographed her in the Fifties, described her almost as an 'objet d'art of the first order'. 'She gives one a feeling of cool perception,' he said. 'She is captivating, but her lure is directed at our better instincts. She has unusually good taste and an unerring sense of comportment. [Actress] Constance Collier once said of another woman, "I know she is much too refined to be a lady"—but there is nothing too refined about Grace Kelly.'

Hitchcock had repeatedly cast her in films such as *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief*. The contrast between Kelly's chilly exterior and the passion he suspected lurked beneath intrigued him; he called her a 'snow-covered volcano'. 'I wanted [her] to appear particularly cold and formal,' he said of her appearance in *To Catch a Thief*. 'But when Cary Grant accompanies her back to her hotel, what does she do? She kisses him full on the mouth. This sort of woman is very capable of getting into a taxi with you and pulling your fly down without any preliminaries.' By the mid-Fifties, Kelly had a reputation as something of a maneater; conquests included her co-stars Ray Milland and William Holden. 'Grace had more lovers in a month than I did in a lifetime,' said Zsa Zsa Gabor. But Rainier was unworried: his main concern was that his future wife could produce an heir—under its constitution at the time, if Monaco lacked a ruler for a single day, the tiny principality (roughly the size of Hyde Park) would automatically become part of France.

On 19 April 1956, the couple were married in Monaco's Cathedral of St Nicholas. Guests at what was called 'the wedding of the century' included David Niven, Gloria Swanson and the Aga Khan. 'One of the reasons for her continuing appeal is the fact that she was the world's first media princess,' says Arash Amel, the scriptwriter and one of the producers of *Grace of Monaco*. 'Her wedding was manufactured by her studio, MGM, which created this image of her as a fairytale princess. Everyone wanted to believe in the dream.'

Yet even before the wedding there were signs that the marriage may not have been all it seemed. An MGM publicist came up with the idea of secreting Grace's wedding dress in a steel box to keep it away from news reporters and photographers. When Grace saw it, she was horrified. She thought the container looked like a coffin—a symbol, perhaps, of her future psychological imprisonment. Some friends had tried to warn her of the unsuitability of the match. Designer Oleg

PHOTOGRAPHS: PREVIOUS PAGES: MARK SHAW/MTV IMAGES; PHOTOGRAPH, OPPOSITE PAGE: VASANTHE NODIA; COLLECTION/LAURENCE SINCLEAR-BULL

From a 1956
photoshoot
for MGM



'THE CAMERA
DID MORE
THAN LOVE HER.
IT WAS INSANE
ABOUT HER'

Posing for *Life*
magazine, 1954



PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIPPE HALSWAN/NOAM PHOTO. HERE: FEATURES/SHAP STILLS. ARCHIVE: PHOTOGUETTY/AGENCE

Casini, one of her lovers before she met Rainier, told Grace that he thought she had agreed to the marriage because 'this is the best script you ever received in your life'. Kelly replied: 'I have made my destiny.'

Grace Kelly was born on 12 November 1929 in Philadelphia to Margaret and John 'Jack' Kelly, a builder and self-made millionaire. An unattractive child, she was often referred to as the 'runt of the litter'. 'She was such a shy little thing,' her younger sister Lizanne Levine told me when I interviewed her at her house in Ocean City, New Jersey, in 1978. When Lizanne was five, she became so angry with her elder sister that she locked her in a cupboard. 'I hoped that she'd start kicking and screaming, just lose her composure. But hours went by with no sound. In exasperation, I unlocked the door. Grace didn't even look up. She just said, "Hi, Lizzie." She had been playing with her toys all that time. She seemed to have been born with a serenity the rest of us didn't have.'

After working as a model, Grace – who at five foot seven weighed 115 pounds – made the transition to acting, first in the theatre and then in movies. By the time she met Rainier in Cannes in 1955, she had made many high-profile films (including *High Noon* with Gary Cooper and *Megamind* with Clark Gable) and had won an Oscar for her role in *The Country Girl*, which also starred Bing Crosby and William Holden. 'I wouldn't have been able to do my job as well as I do it now had I not been an actress,' she would later tell a friend.

Lizanne remembers being astounded at her sister's transformation. 'When she was at special events, she had to act like a princess,' she told me. 'Sometimes she would laugh about how she used to have to act. I don't think I could have stood it myself, all the functions she had to go to, all that politeness. It must have been exhausting. I suppose she might have found it frustrating, but she never said anything.'

Those close to her recognised that, during the early Sixties, Grace suffered a great deal of psychological trauma. 'The year 1962, during which most of the film is set, was definitely her lowest point,' says Arnel. She may have been a princess and a mother – in 1957, she gave birth to Caroline and, in 1958, she provided Rainier with his heir, Albert – but Grace felt as though part of her was dying. It's reported that she started to suffer from mood swings and depression, found it difficult to sleep and, at times, felt isolated and lonely. 'I'm ashamed of how insensitive I was to Grace's solitude in the first year of her marriage,' a friend said later. 'I projected my own fairytale fantasies onto her and her life.'

When Grace first married, she had assumed, perhaps naively, that she would be able to continue her acting career. Rainier initially allowed her to accept the lead in *Marnie* – a film about a frigid kleptomaniac who, as a child, had accidentally killed one of her prostitute mother's lovers – but when news of the part was released, the people of Monaco reacted with hostility. Their attitude had no doubt been influenced by the political situation facing the tax haven. In 1962, de Gaulle threatened to cut off the country's water and power supply unless Rainier imposed business taxes and forwarded the proceeds to France. The *Marnie* offer could not have come at a worse time for Grace and she was forced to turn it down.

'This was apparently one of the unhappiest days of her life,' says Christian de Massy, the nephew of Rainier. Tessa Kennedy, whose grandmother Milica Batnac was a close friend of Rainier's, recalls: 'When Monaco had those problems with the French government at exactly the same time Hitchcock was pitching for her to do *Marnie*, Grace preferred to stay to help her husband.' Yet Lizanne maintained that she had never heard Grace utter a word of complaint. 'It was a great sacrifice,' she said, 'but she knew she couldn't have everything – she couldn't have a family, that title and a film career.'

According to J Randy Taraborrelli, author of *Once Upon a Time: The Story of Princess Grace, Prince Rainier and Their Family*, Grace asked a lawyer what the consequences of a divorce would be. The answer was simple. 'If she chose to leave Rainier and Monaco, she would also have to leave her children,' says Taraborrelli. 'She would have no legal right to them.' Tessa Kennedy says that Grace, who was godmother to her daughter Milica, would never have considered leaving her family. 'She was a wonderful, devoted mother – she adored those children,' she says.

Grace was left with little choice but to continue playing a role, one which, unfortunately, she could not limit to the confines of the silver screen. 'Grace found herself trapped,' says Taraborrelli. In the film, Grace's sense of listlessness is captured in a line given to Hitchcock, who turns to screenwriter Evan Hunter and says, 'Have you ever seen an actor onstage without direction, Evan? Take a trip to Monaco.'

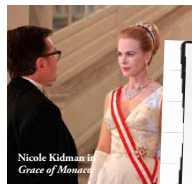
After the birth of Albert, Grace suffered two miscarriages, losses that left her, as she wrote to her friend Prudy Mente, 'shaken both mentally and physically'. Consequently, when she gave birth to her next child, Stéphanie, in 1965, she proceeded to lavish her with attention. 'Although Grace was a very good mother and she was pretty strict with Caroline and Albert, that wasn't the case with Stéphanie,' said Lizanne. 'In fact, I thought she spoilt the little one too much.'

On 13 September 1982, Grace and Stéphanie set off from Roc Agel, the family's country retreat in the Alpes-Maritimes, in the prince's Rover 3500. She was due to see her courtier, Daniel Roland, in Monaco, and on the backseat lay a couple of gowns that needed to be altered. One witness, a truck driver, saw the princess's car zigzag before it disappeared off the edge of the road, plunging 130 feet. Grace was pulled unconscious from the wreck and taken to Monaco Hospital, later named the Princess Grace Hospital Centre, where she died the next day. Rumours persist that Stéphanie, who had recently told her parents that she wanted to become a racing driver, had been at the wheel of the car – rumours she has continually denied. 'Nobody can imagine how much I've suffered, and still suffer,' Stéphanie has said.

Today, just over 30 years after her death, Grace Kelly – lustrous movie star, timeless fashion icon, fairytale princess, conflicted woman – continues to fascinate. In many ways, her life story is an archetypal narrative, one that, in the words of the film writer David Thomson, is 'enough to make Hollywood believe in itself'. But in the midst of the mythologisation, it's easy to forget that Grace was a real woman, one who is still missed. Tessa Kennedy will always remember her tremendous sense of humour and her zest for living. 'She loved parties, the long evenings and fireworks,' she says. 'She would take her favoured guests from one party, at the Casino, on to another party at a swimming pool, and then the dregs would end up at the palace.'

At the funeral – in the church where she married and in front of 400 mourners – actor James Stewart prior to sun up her salute. 'Grace brought into my life, as she brought into yours, a soft, warm light every time I saw her,' he said, 'and every time I saw her was a holiday of its own.' □

Grace of Monaco will be released early in 2014.



Nicole Kidman as
Grace of Monaco



With Prince Rainier,
Prince Albert and
Princess Caroline, c. 1963