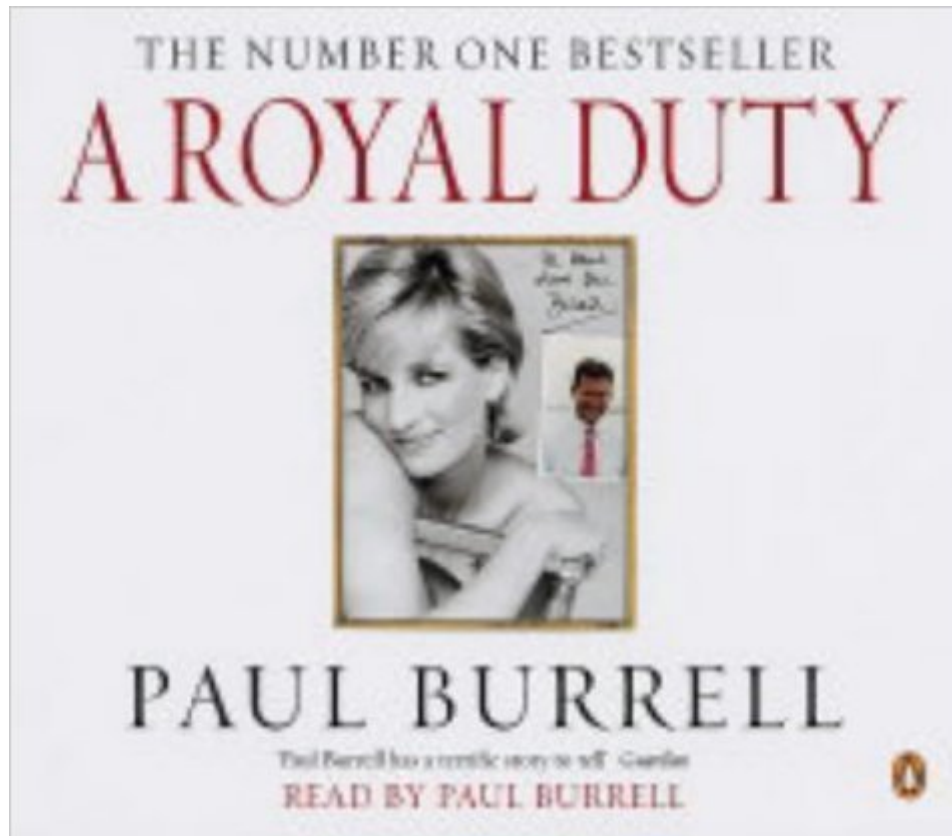


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# A Royal Duty



## Synopsis

The untold story behind one of the most sensational chapters in the history of the House of Windsor. Paul Burrell fought to clear his own name. Now he reveals new truths about Princess Diana - and presents for the first time as faithful an account of her thoughts as we can ever hope to read. He was the favourite footman who formed a unique relationship with the Queen. He was the butler who the Princess of Wales called 'my rock' and 'the only man I can trust'. He was accused of theft, then acquitted following the historic intervention of the monarch. He was the Princess' most intimate confidante - and is the only person able to separate the myth from the truth of the Diana years. Now at last Paul Burrell cuts through the gossip and the lies and takes us closer to the complex heart of the Royal Family than ever before.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Immediately after the tragic death of the much-loved Princess of Wales, there came a plethora of books claiming to be offering the real story of the woman behind the glamorous facade. For the most part, those books seemed to be mean-spirited attempts to bash the Princess' memory while at the same time lining their authors' pockets. Virtually all of these authors appeared to hew to the theory that, since the law does not recognize slander as a legal action when the topic at hand is a deceased party, they then could engage in character assassination, so long as the same re-hashed old tales sold yet more books. In contrast, A ROYAL DUTY is the rare book which attempts to defend and explain the way in which the Princess of Wales lived her life. Thus, simply for going against the tide, it is valuable. Perhaps author Paul Burrell is slightly overwrought in his devotion to

the late Princess. He's entitled to be. He dedicated his career to her. Reading between the lines, he has not yet gotten over his first glimpse of her corpse, presumably after its autopsy, a sight for which he was emotionally unprepared, and a sight from which her ex-husband and her family must have been shielded. Was Burrell in love with Diana? Probably, a little bit, in a way that defines the concept of perfect and platonic love. As such, he is her protector. He says that he wrote this book to defend Diana, to explain her side of the story to her sons, and to justify his complete lack of guilt in the witch hunt which Scotland Yard and the royal courtiers mounted against him. On all counts, he makes a compelling case and, reading this book, I came to believe him.

When it comes to someone with as high a profile as Princess Di, there is a deluge of books and articles, many disappointing and trite. This book was a book that would have been well worth reading even if I never heard of Di before. I really like how Paul Burrell put enough about himself and his own attitudes in this book so that I could not only see where he was coming from, but also could try to understand better the British attitudes toward royalty. He takes you through a walk of what it was like for him to be the Queen's butler for a while before he gets into the story about Diana, and though I felt impatient at first with this, I realized as I read on that by doing so he helped me to have a much more full and realistic perspective about Diana's life -- not only her choices, but the environment in which she lived. It was also endearing how he wrote this book as someone with a great love and great respect for the Princess. He reveals a lot of surprising things, and many of them caused me to feel more empathy for Diana than ever before -- and to feel as if I have been introduced to her on a very personal level. It was as if her best friend sat with me over coffee during a 3-day retreat and recounted all that he could divulge without dishonoring pledges made to her. I was kind of surprised that he told as much as he did, being that he was and is so deferential to the Princess, but I suspect she would have wanted it that way. He makes it clear that there are also some things he will take to the grave. Just the way a best friend would. As I finished this book I felt a sincere gratitude to Paul Burrell for having written it. I had admired Di from afar; now I feel I know her ever so much better, and admire her more than ever as well.

Although Paul Burrell was and still is devoted to the late Princess (actually, besotted might be a better word) and has written a book intended to show the world what a wonderful person she was, he unintentionally reveals aspects of her character which were not so wonderful. For instance, what kind of person would pull her employee out of bed, away from his family, in the middle of the night in order to deliver a note to one of her boyfriends (after he had already put in a very long day at

work!)? Who would have her transatlantic friend regularly set her alarm clock at 3 in the morning so that the friend could give her a pep talk just to make it through the day ( a day which included such stressful activities as shopping, working out at the gym and visiting her astrologer)? Who would give a devoted employee (Paul's wife, Maria) the cold shoulder because the employee wanted more time with her own children? Yes, Diana had many lovely qualities, but the image that comes through (from someone who was very close to her) is of a woman who is also demanding, needy, self-absorbed and manipulative (not to mention, a terrible judge of character when it came to male companions - could she have chosen anyone worse than Dodi, who picked a drunkard to drive their car on that last, fatal evening). Paul Burrell clearly agreed with the Princess that the marriage breakdown was all Prince Charles' fault, even though he only joined their household after the marriage was over in all but name (when they both had lovers) and has no idea what really went on during the first six years (I think the marriage was doomed, Camilla or no Camilla).

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