MY JOURNEY IN A PRIVATE JET WITH COCO CHANEL

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Laurence Isaacson was 24 when, onboard a Learjet, an immaculately dressed woman struck up a curious conversationwith him

When I was 24 and still had a waist, a lot of incredibly wealthy men would chase me around. One of these men saw me in London and invited me to have dinner with him in Paris. So I did what any 24-year-old would do: I said yes.

The next day he sent his private Learjet to pick me up and flew me over. He owned Perrier, so he was fabulously wealthy. He wined and dined me and was clearly trying to get into my pants, but I wouldn't give it up. Finally he said: "I'll give you anything you want." And I said: "A ticket home!" So the next morning, true to his word, he arranged for the jet to take me back to London.

I was sitting in the jet and the stewardess offered champagne. Then I saw this other woman on the plane. She was slightly older, but was immaculately dressed and poised on the edge of her seat. She was wearing a very tailored black suit with a stunning gold brooch. Very elegant. She looked at me and said: "*Bonjour, comment t'appelle tu*?" "*Bonjour*," I said. "*Je m'appelle Laurence*. *Et vous, madame*?" And she said: "*Coco. Coco Chanel*."

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So we spent the flight back to London exchanging stories and talking about how our mutual friend had tried to make a move on me. She remained very calm and just laughed and said: “Ah Gussy, that is his way.”

She asked me which hotel Gussy had put me in. I said: “De Crillon.” And where did you dine, she asked? “Maxim’s de Paris.” I went on to ask her if she liked London and she said: “Of course.” And where do you dine when in London, I asked? She said, “The Savoy, Prunier and L’Escargot.”

She wanted to know more about my upbringing as she was clearly still slightly intrigued to see a 24-year-old joining her on this trip back to London, so I talked about my background and education. I told her I came from Liverpool in the north of England and went to the same school as the Beatles and regularly fought with George Harrison in the playground. I was surprised she knew all about them.

I then went on to tell her that I’d gone to the London School of Economics when I was 17 with Mick Jagger, by which she was less impressed. She asked about other cities I had visited. “Young man,” she said: “*C’est la vie*.”

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