

## Praise for *Ed...*

‘Macintyre and Hasan have penned the essential guide to Labour’s new leader.’ ADAM BOULTON

‘In this biography, based on interviews with scores of his friends, critics and colleagues, two of Britain’s finest young political journalists penetrate far beyond the prevailing gossip and hearsay to provide an illuminating portrait of the youngest Labour leader in the party’s history. Writing with verve and acuity, the authors provide the first authoritative account of Miliband’s dramatic rise to power.’ JONATHAN DIMBLEBY

‘Exhaustively researched and written with unflagging energy ... May prove to be the definitive account of the formative years and rise to power...’ JOHN GRAY, *The Guardian*

‘A well-researched, clear-eyed close-up look at Ed Miliband and the conditions in which he got elected to the toughest job in British politics. The insights are illuminating. The writing is vigorous. No perspective of contemporary politics will be complete without it.’ NEIL KINNOCK

‘Political journalists Mehdi Hasan and James Macintyre are by instinct sympathetic to their main subject. But they take care to do a straight reporting job, painstakingly comparing the accounts of sources from all sides to unpack the history of what they call the “fratricide” of Miliband v. Miliband.’ SUNDER KUTWALA, *The Observer*

‘Mehdi Hasan and James Macintyre have made an excellent preliminary investigation. Their book is shrewd, scrupulously researched and provides revelations on every page ... It provides the basis for any serious understanding both of Ed Miliband and the modern Labour Party ... They tell in penetrating yet sympathetic detail the growing bitterness and sense of betrayal, leading up to a final breakdown of relations ... The authors of this book have synthesised their talents to create a first-class early draft of a fascinating tale. There may be many chapters yet to come.’  
PETER OBORNE, *Daily Telegraph*

‘The story of the Miliband brothers is intriguing as an ideological tract, a political thriller and a family psychodrama. So you can take this book by two talented political journalists, Mehdi Hasan and James Macintyre, as a beach read as well as a Westminster handbook ... You would be hard-pressed to find a more interesting read than this.’ SARAH SANDS, *Evening Standard*

## PROLOGUE

The time had come to emerge from the shadows. Just after 10pm on the night of Wednesday 12 May, Ed Miliband left his house in Dartmouth Park to make the ten-minute drive to his childhood home in Primrose Hill, where he and his brother David had grown up, and where the latter now lived. Earlier that day, David had announced that he was standing as Labour leader; less than twenty-four hours after Gordon Brown left Downing Street for the last time. Stung in the past by criticism that he had ‘bottled out’ of challenging Brown, David was determined to be first to declare, surrounded by supportive MPs outside St Stephen’s entrance to the Houses of Parliament. For several years, David had dismayed his supporters by resisting challenging Brown. Now he was the frontrunner. He was ready. And he had to win.

Ed maintains that as he watched David’s statement on television that day, he had yet fully to make up his mind. There is evidence, however, that on the previous morning, despite widespread hope in sections of the Labour Party for a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, Ed Miliband had already decided to run should the negotiating talks fail. Either way, at some point between the Monday evening – when Gordon Brown met the Liberal Democrats’ key condition by promising to stand down as Prime Minister – and now, he had finalised the hardest decision of his life.

Only the future leader’s partner Justine was in the house to see him off. Minutes earlier, two of Ed’s closest friends, Stewart Wood and Gavin Kelly, had left the couple in peace. Kelly went home while Wood made his way to a nearby Indian restaurant, the Monsoon. He would wait there, like a crutch of support, for Ed to emerge from his nerve-wracking rendezvous with his elder brother. David’s two children were asleep upstairs when their uncle arrived at the house, but his wife, the musician Louise Shackleton, was still awake. The brothers, however, spoke alone.



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Ed, then forty, says he left his brother, four years his senior, with little doubt that he planned to stand for the Labour leadership. ‘I’d rather you didn’t run,’ replied David. ‘I’d rather have a campaign where my brother was supporting me, if I’m really honest.’ But, with composure and generosity of spirit that impressed even Ed’s most loyal supporters, David added: ‘I don’t want me to be the reason you don’t stand, so I think you should do it.’

Round the corner, Wood – who had been expecting to linger over his curry for some time – was surprised to receive a text message at 10.45pm. It was Ed; he was going home and Wood should join him and Justine there. The younger brother seemed to feel the meeting had gone better than he had expected. Wood would later say that he could sense the relief in Ed’s demeanour. The deed was done.

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Or was it? The tragedy of the Miliband brothers, and the consequence of their bitter struggle for the Labour leadership during the summer of 2010, is that today the two men cannot even agree when it happened: the moment that Ed Miliband confronted his older brother David with his decision to run against him for the leadership of the Labour Party.



Indeed it is remarkable that in the face of this detailed and persuasive account of the pivotal days after Gordon Brown left the premiership, offered by Ed and his closest allies, David is emphatic: there was no meeting that week between the two brothers.

For all the bitter political and personal fallout from Ed’s decision to stand, David has in fact refuted the most damning rumours that some of his outriders have spread about his brother’s ‘betrayal’. He denies, for example, a belief widely held in Westminster that Ed rang David on the night James Purnell resigned from Brown’s Cabinet in May 2009 and assured David that if he stayed in government the leadership was his for the taking after the general election. Many David supporters believe Ed persuaded David not to challenge Brown to prevent his brother’s coronation and ensure a later contest in which he would be a candidate. Yet David does not recall such a move by Ed.

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Indeed, David has told friends that he remembers a conversation at the turn of November and December 2009, when he interpreted Ed's refusal to join a move against Brown as a possible sign of his future intention to run. Back then, of the two brothers only David had been seen as a credible alternative to Brown. He further accepts that then, and in the following months, he had the chance to ask his brother to support his own impending leadership bid, but made no such demand. He does not even deny that at some point between the end of 2009 and Ed's declaration on Saturday 15 May, David Miliband told his younger brother that he would not 'stand in the way' of Ed running for the Labour leadership if he insisted on doing so. It is therefore all the more remarkable that David denies this meeting took place.

It is tempting to conclude that the truth must lie somewhere in the middle, that Ed went round to David's house but stopped short of making it 100 per cent clear he was going to run at the end of that week. Indeed Ed himself has modified his account – from saying that he told his brother bluntly he had decided to run to saying that he told him he was 'seriously thinking' about a leadership bid. And having originally thought that Thursday 13 May was the evening of the encounter, Ed and his team are now clear that it was Wednesday 12 May.

And yet David is adamant that Ed did not set foot in his house at all in that critical week; that at best, Ed must have his timings mixed up. And that in any case, in their various conversations Ed was never explicit about his intentions, until he telephoned on the Friday, forty-eight hours after David's declaration, to tell – not ask – his brother about the announcement he would be making of his own candidacy in central London the following day.

Unlike Ed, David will not put a date on when the exchange about not standing in Ed's way took place. But he points out that from the Thursday of polling day to Saturday 8 May, he was in his constituency of South Shields. He was obviously in London on the day he declared, but friends say he would certainly have remembered if his younger brother had visited him with such deflating news the very same day. The following day he was campaigning in Worcester and it was only on the Friday, according to David, that Ed presented his *fait accompli*.



## ED

The exact circumstances of this exchange are important because from the point of view of Ed, confident all along that he would beat his brother, informing David was the biggest hurdle of all. For David, this was his chance to assert himself, to ask – or tell – Ed to put family loyalty before political determination. Whatever the truth, this seemingly trivial discrepancy, which in fact has its roots in an unusual sibling rivalry going back decades, is the clearest demonstration of the dysfunctional distrust and distance that now exists between the brothers. And it shows that the reverberations of Ed deciding to run against his brother continue to this day.

The fact that the Miliband brothers, and their camps, have insisted on sticking to diametrically opposing accounts points to a difficult future for the relationship at the heart of Labour's recent history. And the competing narratives about just what happened between the two men in the days before nominations closed in May 2010 give more than a hint of the trauma that decision inflicted on both brothers, one that is still very far from being healed today, and perhaps never will be.



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Why did Ed do it? Why did this apparently kind, gentle man with strong emotional sensibilities, put politics and ambition before family and decide to stand against his own brother? Why didn't he, say, run David's campaign, seek to influence the leadership from within, avoiding any of the very real family fallout that was to follow? The Miliband brothers have in the past excitedly been referred to as the modern Kennedys of British politics. So why did Ed not follow the example of his hero Robert Kennedy, who proved to be his older brother Jack's staunchest ally throughout his presidency?

Ed must have realised that Westminster, and perhaps in time the country, would be divided over the rights and wrongs of challenging his brother for the same job after years of following in his footsteps. Some of his more hard-headed supporters would dismiss any misgivings as primitive nonsense. But he must have known that there would be others who saw it as an almost biblical act of fratricide.

The story of this determined politician cannot be understood without examining the context in which he emerged from his

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dominant sibling's shadow. If the brothers were close, it was not in the usual way. In the words of one rare close friend of both, they inhabited 'different worlds', personally – and politically.

Both had seen their father, the Marxist intellectual Ralph Miliband, as a 'lodestar'. Both moved quickly to the centre of mainstream Labour politics. Both attended the same school, the same college at Oxford, spent formative time in America, and worked as special advisers at the heart of New Labour before entering Parliament and, eventually, the Cabinet. Yet, crucially, the brothers found themselves on the frontline on either side of the hugely damaging Blair–Brown wars that besieged the party in government. It was, in the end, the issue of Brown that divided them most. David could not bear him; Ed's loyalty was total. And that loyalty had already caused him to choose between allegiance to Gordon Brown – which he equated with allegiance to the party itself – and loyalty to his brother, Brown's principal rival during his premiership.

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Ed Miliband has had several moments of inner-doubt over the years: over whether Labour could fulfil his kind of political ideals, whether to quit politics for a life in the media or academia, and whether or not to challenge his brother for the leadership. Yet he has never doubted his own abilities, his own potential.

He says he told David in his house that he was going to run; David denies this. But this was just the beginning of the dramas to come. And, having crossed the psychological Rubicon, Ed was now prepared to do whatever it took to win.

The Miliband family, if not the Labour Party, would be changed forever. But there was no going back.