



hen Meghan Markle slipped into the back door of St. Luke's Church in London for her first Christmas carol service as a royal, she came prepared. The intimate crowd included longstanding friends of the royal family along with members of the Middleton family. (Princess Kate was across town at the annual Buckingham Palace white-tie gala for diplomats.) Seated across from Kate's mom, Carole, and sister Pippa—whom she warmly greeted after the service—Meghan sat with her husband, Prince Harry, before stepping up to the pulpit to read "Our Deepest Fear,"

The Space **Between Them** Kate and Meghan have shared only one public appearance as a duo—at Wimbledon in July. Kate, a passionate tennis fan, left before the day's matches were done.

Meghan stayed.

in Windsor (right).

a poem by American author Marianne Williamson. "We are all meant to shine, as children do." she recited. "And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."

The message of self-acceptance arrived just as Meghan, who is expecting her first child with Harry this spring, finds herself under the glare of a harsh new light. Seven months after her storybook wedding, the former Suits star, 37, is struggling to find her footing, multiple insiders tell People. "The palace is a magical place, and it is also a place where all you hear is 'No, no, no," a source in royal circles says of the confining rules that govern royal life. But it is her complex relationship with Kate, 36, that has generated a flurry of tabloid headlines

claiming that the two women are at odds. "They Meghan and Harry were expected to remain at sington Palace (left), with plans to renovate the spacious Apartment 1. But several sources say that they had a sudden change of heart—with Harry especially yearning for the

are very different characters," says a source close to the family. The tensions between them boiled over on at least one occasion—just days before Harry and Meghan tied the knot on May 19. "There was an argument between Meghan and Kate over the fit of [3-year-old] Princess Charlotte's dress," a family friend confirms. A different source says, "There were very few fittings for the bridesmaids. Everything was left to the last minute, and it was really stressful for everyone involved."

At the same time, tensions mounted when the Queen declined to grant Meghan's first choice of wedding tiara. It was one of many fraught royalwedding conversations, which, according to royal biographer Robert Jobson, left Harry shouting at staff, "What Meghan wants, Meghan gets!" On Dec. 1 their shared office at Kensington Palace took the rare step of publicly denying a report that

> Kate had warned Meghan not to scold staff members. (The palace has not commented on other reports of conflict.)

> Given their starring roles in the world's ultimate real-life fairy tale, the two women one a newcomer to the royal world, the other with more than a decade of experience in it—are both exceedingly capable of owning the spotlight. "An ordinary woman is not going to get to become a princess," says a palace insider. "There is a necessary strength of character and ambition and single-mindedness. It takes

someone really strong. That is Kate and Meghan."

-PALACE INSIDER

With both William, 36, and Harry, 34, now building their own separate families, the relationship between them has naturally shifted too. Last month came the news that Meghan and Harry are moving out of their Kensington Palace home, where they currently live alongside William and Kate, to Frogmore Cottage in Windsor, putting more than 20 miles between the two couples. "[The move] will be the best thing for all of them," says the family friend. "Like Meghan and Kate, Harry and William have totally different roles. But the brothers will always come together because they are Diana's sons."

For Meghan life as the Duchess of Sussex couldn't be further from her Southern California upbringing. A Northwestern University graduate who forged a successful Hollywood career, the onetime lifestyle blogger is now firmly within the labyrinth of palace bureaucracy, much of which SIGNS OF STRAIN

Publicly, Meghan and Kate have maintained a friendly vibe, but behind the scenes, things haven't always gone smoothly

Charlotte's Dress

A source says that Meghan and Kate clashed during a fitting for Charlotte's bridesmaid dress weeks before Meghan's weddingending with Kate in tears. Charlotte also served as a bridesmaid in her aunt Pippa's wedding in 2017, with Meghan invited only to the evening receptioncreating early tensions.





Harry sat between Meghan and Kate at the Oct. 12 wedding, where Meghan and Harry shared their pregnancy news leading some guests to feel they had upstaged the newlyweds. They also skipped the nighttime party.



WHO GETS THE

Meghan and Kate have access to one of the most enviable jewelry boxes in the world. including loaners from Queen Elizabeth and heirlooms inherited by William and Harry from Princess Diana. "It's a very emotional thing to take something Diana has worn and give it to these women that they love," says jeweler Pippa Small.



is currently overseen by her father-in-law, Prince Charles. With a successful charity cookbook under her belt and plans to advance education and empowerment for women and girls around the globe, she is at a crossroads. "The most difficult job in the royal family is to work with Meghan's ambitions and make them realizable," says another source close to the family. "She will get frustrated if she is told. 'You can't do this or can't do that.'"

Among those who have worked with her there is a sense that Meghan's commanding style is a reflection of her American roots. Veteran royal aides "might not be used to the 'say-it-as-you-seeit' American mentality," says the insider. Meghan, who is close with her mom, L.A. yoga instructor Doria Ragland, but estranged from her father, former TV lighting director Thomas Markle, "is steely and knows what she wants," adds the source close to the family.

Kate, on the other hand, "has maneuvered herself in a different way," says the palace insider, "but she is still strong." Raised in the English countryside by entrepreneurs Carole and Mike Middleton, Kate is acutely aware of her role as the future Queen—and she is also immersed in her life as a mother to Prince George, 5, Princess Charlotte, 3, and Prince Louis. 8 months. William and Kate "have created their own nest, and they are confident in what they're doing," says the insider. Asked by a fan on Nov. 28 about Meghan and Harry's upcoming arrival, Kate said, "It's such a special time to have little kiddies. And a cousin for George and Charlotte, as well, and

Several sources say that although the focus has been on Meghan's recent challenges, Harry is struggling too. "Harry doesn't have his own structure like William, whose role [as the future King] is clear-cut and defined," says the insider. "Harry's isn't." Harry has been standoffish and "really

Louis. It'll be really special."



HOW THEIR MOMS GUIDE THEM

Doria Ragland, 62, and Carole Middleton, 63, both raised self-assured daughters who continue to lean on them in key ways. "We can have so much fun together, and yet I'll still find so much solace in her support," Meghan told Glamour of Doria, who flew from her L.A. home to London for Meghan's first royal speech in September. Carole recently spoke to The Telegraph, saying, "I was involved lots with both Pip's and Catherine's weddings. But I think the most important thing, as a parent, is to listen to what your daughter wants."

The 2 Women

Behind Their

Kate's classic

English looks are

tyled by Natash

Archer (below).

Meghan relies on Canadian pal

essica Mulrone

(bottom left),

served as page boys in the

royal wedding

nose twin sons

grumpy" lately, says a well-connected source. "Something has changed, and no one can quite put their finger on it. He looks cross with the world." Historically the "spare" to the heir—including the Queen's younger sister Princess Margaret-can

struggle to find a sense of purpose. "Harry doesn't want to be the Margaret of the family," says the insider, "and certainly Meghan doesn't want to either. They want to do their own thing. And to do that, you need to be away sometimes." Moving forward Meghan plans to carve out a role with various organizations supporting women's and girls' empowerment. Kate will advance her work with Heads Together, the initiative she cofounded with William and Harry to destigmatize mentalhealth issues in the U.K. "Kate's brilliant at her job, and Meghan will be too," says the family friend.

While the foursome will continue to team up for their charitable work and various family occasions-including Christmas with the Queen at her estate in Sandringham—many close to the two couples say a shift in family dynamics was always inevitable when Harry eventual-

ly married. "Wives do change the dynamic, and they both have very strong wives," says the palace insider. "If you bring two independent-minded women from the real world into the royal world, they are going to want to have an impact." And if that means ruffling some feathers among the palace establishment? "Some feathers need to be ruffled."

With reporting by Simon Perry in London



Cambridge Lovers' Knot Tiara Kate's favorite tiara was also Diana's—but it belongs to the Queen. It was originally commissioned from famous court jewelers Garrard by Queen Mary in 1914 and is a replica of a 200-year-old Gothic Revival tiara





Diana's



