



OMID SCOBIE
and
CAROLYN DURAND

FINDING FREEDOM

HARRY *AND* MEGHAN

and the MAKING *of*

A MODERN ROYAL FAMILY



finding freedom

HARRY and MEGHAN
and the Making of a Modern Royal Family

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CAROLYN DURAND

 DEY ST.
An Imprint of WILLIAM MORROW

Epigraph

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and
leave a trail.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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Prologue

It was a blink-and-you'll-miss-it moment. As we watched Meghan smooth the belt of her crisp white LINE the Label coat and brush a loose lock of hair out of her eyes, she looked over at a nervous Harry and put her hand on his back, rubbing the same spot several times. He was used to being in front of the press, but this time was different. He wasn't advocating for one of his charities or urging leaders to take climate change seriously; he was sharing something personal: the news of his engagement to Meghan. Holding hands, they made their way to the throng of photographers waiting nearby.

"You've got this," she whispered to the prince as they walked out of a small gate at the side of Kensington Palace and up the long, canopied path to the Sunken Garden, whose lily-covered water in the ornamental pond and colorful pansies, tulips, and begonias made it one of Princess Diana's favorite spots on the estate she once called home.

This was the couple's big engagement photo-call, at which I had arrived with only minutes to spare after a frantic highway dash from a long weekend break in Oxfordshire. Carolyn, ahead of me, was already in her place with the small huddle of royal correspondents who work directly with the royal households on a daily basis. As longtime members of this group, she and I receive intel as we shadow senior members of the British royal family at home and abroad.

The privilege of covering the royals so closely is that you are front and center for those landmark moments in their lives. We were on the steps of the Lindo Wing when George, Charlotte, and Louis each were born. It's easy to take for granted these moments, which will one day be part of the history books. But as Harry grinned at Meghan, who held his hand between both of hers, and the cheers of well-wishers gathered in Kensington Garden erupted in a "hip hip hooray!," even the most hard-nosed reporters there smiled. The feeling of magic in that moment was undeniable.

Carolyn and I have closely followed the work of the Royal Family since long before Meghan joined what is known as the Firm. For years we have traveled with William, Kate, and Harry around the world. From Singapore to the Solomon Islands, Lesotho to India, the United States to New Zealand, we shared the same planes and dizzying itineraries as these young royals. I've always likened royal tours to a class field trip or camp, because you're cramped together on big buses and clamoring to get the best rooms at the hotel. There's also a sense of camaraderie, not just among the reporters, staff, and security guards but also with the royals themselves.

Take the time I lost my passport in São Paulo, Brazil. I was frantically searching my bag at the airport when I got a call from one of the palace aides. I could hear Harry's distinctive laugh in the background. They had found my passport on the floor. Not wanting to leave me high and dry in Brazil, the prince sent over one of his protection officers, passport in hand, to my terminal so I could get to Chile on time. The next time I saw Harry, however, he forwent my name, instead calling me "Passport." As we Brits say, he likes to take the mickey.

Being far from the scrutiny and pressures of home was also an opportunity for heart-to-hearts. On that same trip, Harry confessed to me at a small drinks gathering at our hotel that he really wished he were "just a normal guy" who could pack up and spend a year in Brazil pursuing his own passions. He said that he hated smartphones being constantly thrust in his face, that the thrum of professional camera shutters going off sometimes made him feel physically ill.

Carolyn and I always knew Harry dreamed of a life away from palace walls, but while traveling with the prince, particularly in the countryside, we noticed that his wish to be connected to everyday rural life was often accompanied by a sense of sadness. Although an impossibility, he wished to connect with the locals without the fuss his arrival always meant.

Then, as now, Harry deeply craves normalcy of the kind that his mother, Diana, tried to replicate for him on trips to amusement parks and McDonald's. (How funny to know that the favorite part of a Happy Meal for this child, born of unimaginable wealth and privilege, was getting the cheap plastic toy inside.)

Harry is different from his brother, William, who takes after their orderly and pragmatic granny, the Queen. He's emotional and clings to utopian ideals, yet in his way, admirably so. His desire to live outside of the Palace

bubble—in everything from being a “hugger” at official engagements to insisting he serve on the front lines of war as a member of the armed forces—is a positive attribute, even if at times it causes problems for the rest of the royal family.

His wholeheartedness allowed him to start a new chapter in royal history when he fell in love with Meghan Markle.

Being a mixed-race Brit was one of the reasons that I, like a lot of the younger and more diverse demo the Duke and Duchess of Sussex turned into royal watchers, found the American actress marrying into the House of Windsor so fascinating. Funnily enough, I met Meghan before Harry did. Back in 2015, I chatted with her for the first time at a Fashion Week event in Toronto after she did press interviews on the carpet. No one was more amazed than me when just a year later, Meg (as her close friends and now husband call her) captured the heart of the most eligible bachelor this side of the pond.

Even in the early days of their relationship, it was clear that Harry had found a woman who awakened his sense of purpose with humanitarian passions that mirrored his own drive to support those on the margins of society. The world watched in amazement as the couple’s relationship rapidly developed. And Carolyn and I watched, too, as a number of tabloids went on to accuse Meghan of being a demanding and difficult social climber. Some of the British press did little to hide racial undertones in snarky commentary and headlines.

The narrative that emerged was most surprising to Meghan, who brought to her charitable interests and official engagements as the newest member of the royal family the same go-get-’em approach she’s taken from the time she was an eleven-year-old writing letters of protest to national leaders, including Hillary Clinton, over a sexist soap ad. It’s not unknown for her to stay up late into the night before events, doing her own research and preparing her own notes despite having a staff for just such work. “It’s the only way I know how to do it,” she confessed to me. That’s part of what made the prince declare he’d found the “teammate” he had always been looking for.

So, it was a surreal moment to be giving Meghan a big farewell hug in one of the state rooms at Buckingham Palace in March 2020 as she wrapped her last solo royal engagement. She and Harry had made the difficult decision to step back as senior working royals in a bid to protect their

family. We had only been in the opulent 1844 Room for only happy occasions, such as engagements with the Queen or media receptions. Now even the malachite candelabras illuminating portrait paintings cast a gloomy light as the newest members of the royal family were saying goodbye not just to their staff but to an entire way of life.

Carolyn and I had been with Meghan for her final engagements but it was still hard to believe that this would be the last one. Staff who had been with the couple from day one were mourning the end of what was supposed to be a happy story: two people fall in love, get married, have a baby, serve the Queen, the end. Instead, they were leaving the country. As Meghan gave me a final hug goodbye, she said, “It didn’t have to be this way.”

Yes, Carolyn and I witnessed the many private and public struggles Harry and Meghan went through in the first two years of their marriage. Still, this was not the ending to the book that either of us expected to write—or that the couple expected to be living.

As a rule, no member of the British royal family is officially allowed to authorize a biography. However, Carolyn and I were able to gain extensive access to those closest to the couple: friends, trusted aides, senior courtiers, and many individuals in the Sussexes’ inner circle. We also accompanied Harry and Meghan on hundreds of their engagements, work trips, and tours, spanning from Ireland to Tonga, all in an effort to create an intimate and accurate portrait of a truly modern royal couple who, whether their decisions have won them praise or criticism, have always remained faithful to their own beliefs.

—*Omid Scobie and Carolyn Durand, London, 2020*

Introduction

With the last of their luggage arriving onto the four-acre Mille Fleurs estate in Victoria, Canada, where they would be staying for the next six weeks, Harry and Meghan breathed a collective sigh of relief. Most their belongings had already been placed in advance of their arrival in the grand his-and-hers walk-in closets of the 11,416-square-foot mansion they had rented from an acquaintance. They were worlds away from Frogmore Cottage, their home in Windsor—but that wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Though the smiles on their faces at public engagements had been consistent through their departure, the weeks leading up to their Air Canada flight from London's Heathrow Airport in mid-November were anything but cheerful. Having recently launched lawsuits against three British tabloids for invasion of privacy and phone-hacking allegations, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex seemed more a target of the press than ever.

For Harry especially, it was all getting to be too much. "Doesn't the Queen Deserve Better?" screamed a *Daily Mail* headline, which the prince read online. He couldn't understand why the media were so hell-bent on tearing them down. "These people are just paid trolls," he later told a friend. "Nothing but trolls . . . And it's disgusting."

Scrolling on his iPhone, he sometimes couldn't stop himself from reading the comments on the article.

H&M disgust me.

They are a disgrace to the royal family.

The world would be a better place without Harry and Meghan in it.

The last comment had over 3,500 upvotes.

Harry instantly regretted opening the link. His stomach tied into the same knot every time he saw these sorts of comments. "It's a sick part of the society we live in today, and no one is doing anything about it," he