

# VOGUE

SEP

**MARISSA  
MAYER**  
MOGUL,  
MOTHER,  
LIGHTNING  
ROD

**SEVEN  
MINUTES TO  
A BETTER  
BODY?**

**GIRL ON FIRE**  
**JENNIFER  
LAWRENCE**  
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UNGUARDED, AND  
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Hollywood's newest mogul-in-the-making is giving vintage glamour the 21st-century digital treatment





EDITOR: SARAH BROWN

## SHE'S SO VIOLET

**A**n Arcadian summer afternoon in Beverly Hills, and *Mad Men* star Jessica Paré is having her photo taken. She lounges by the pool at the estate of the fabled movie producer Robert Evans, her hair in wild curls, her long legs encased in bold vintage-print pants, looking like a tableau from a seventies fashion spread. Surrounding her, just out of frame, loom a photographer, stylist, makeup artist, hairdresser, and assorted assistants. Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, the actress and model, is art directing.

A gamine figure stands watching unobtrusively in the background, wearing a striped polo and black capris. This is 36-year-old Cassandra Huysentruyt Grey, the architect of this photo shoot—one of a series for her new e-commerce beauty site, Violet Grey, launching this fall. Grey's métier is *beauty*>664

### GREY LADY

AT HER START-UP HEADQUARTERS, CASSANDRA GREY CHANNELS OLD-WORLD DECORUM IN A VALENTINO DRESS AND SALVATORE FERRAGAMO FLATS. PHOTOGRAPHED BY SEBASTIAN KIM. FASHION EDITOR: LAWREN HOWELL.

HOLLYWOOD'S  
NEWEST MOGUL-IN-  
THE-MAKING  
IS GIVING VINTAGE  
GLAMOUR THE  
21ST-CENTURY  
DIGITAL TREATMENT.  
JANELLE BROWN  
MEETS THE  
WOMAN BEHIND  
VIOLET GREY.



creating “moments” of nostalgia-tinged glamour like this one, moments that can then be translated into real-world makeup tips, tutorials, and product sales.

Informed by the era of social media, Grey sees an opportunity to connect image-conscious consumers with Hollywood insiders. It’s something she’s uniquely positioned to do; as she delicately puts it, “I have a front-row seat within Hollywood culture.” To be less delicate: As the wife of Paramount CEO Brad Grey, she has the A-list on speed dial.

With her Audrey Hepburn looks, Grey may be worthy of the spotlight herself, but she prefers to stay behind the Polaroid camera she carries in her

Francisco-based father, the son of a Bay Area real estate investor, and her nomadic mother, a Montessori teacher and artist who believed that the best way to educate her children was to expose them to “experiences.” Those experiences included living in a Quaker community, on a farm, and in a tepee on an Indian reservation.

Grey ultimately decided to stay with her father, in order to attend high school. It wasn’t what she expected. “I didn’t connect,” she says. “I wasn’t like those kids.”

#### TALK OF THE TOWN

FROM LEFT: GREY IN HER MELROSE PLACE OFFICE, IN A STELLA MCCARTNEY DRESS, WITH BRAD GREY AT THEIR WEDDING, APRIL 2011.



Instead, she spent time with her grandmother—an eccentric San Francisco matriarch who wore white gloves every day and, at Christmas, wrapped anything from toothpaste to ruby rings—and with books. There, Grey discovered Truman Capote and began her lifelong passion for his cool, captivating swans.

By her early 20s, she was working in marketing and accumulating a noteworthy collection of friends. Francis Ford Coppola remembers meeting her when she was 23: “She was wearing a big fuzzy coat and looked quite beautiful, sort of like that young-girl character in *The World of Henry Orient*, just back from London and talking about

Tantric love. We used to play scopas for hours.”

In 2003, she moved to New York, working as a brand consultant who specialized in concocting eclectic, vintage-feeling events. Her friend Bennett Miller, director of *Capote* and *Moneyball*, remembers watching her walk up to a total stranger, ask shockingly personal questions, and then be fascinated by the offended reaction. “She was sort of a free radical... a little bit of a provocateur,” he says. “What’s that Kerouac quote—people

who “burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles”? She was something like that.”

She was living in an apartment in the West Village (“By the time you walked through the door, you’d walked through the kitchen”) and working on the founding team of the private arts club Norwood when she found herself at a dinner party in 2008 with Brad Grey.

Grey—who grew to fame as a talent manager and TV producer (*The Sopranos*, *The Larry Sanders Show*) before founding Plan B production company with Brad Pitt and then taking over Paramount—recalls being struck by her immediately: “Cassandra has this magical spirit. She is authentic, which is very, very rare. All of that was evident.”

Cassandra took a little more convincing. “At first he didn’t seem like a logical person I should be going out with,” she says. “He lived in Los Angeles, was much older than me, had *beauty* >666

white Céline tote. “I’ve always been the girl behind the girl, watching the girl,” she says in her soft, smoky voice. “I’m not the girl that people are watching.”

Consider this a case of willful blindness. Since her high-profile marriage two years ago, Grey has been in the public eye, whether she likes it or not. Her image thus far has comprised a widely circulated fashion video (more on that later) and her Instagram feed, peppered with snapshots of first-name-only stars and jet-set destinations (chic people, places, and things are considered “#soviolet”). Together, they might lead one to expect shallow frivolity. But in person Grey is self-effacing and ardently curious, with a sly sense of humor.

If transformation is Grey’s source material for a beauty empire devoted to the art of reinvention, it’s also the source material for her own life. She was raised bouncing between her San

### GREY'S L.A. CASSANDRA'S SECRET ADDRESSES

#### DOAN'S BAKERY

I learned about it from Tom Cruise. Tom is the most elegant person in Hollywood. He’s constantly sending their coconut cakes as gifts. It’s known as the Cruise Cake. Amazing. Best cake I ever had. There’s a lot of gift-giving in Hollywood—it’s a relationship town. 22526 VENTURA BLVD., WOODLAND HILLS (818) 591-9236

#### LEADAPRON

It’s more of a gallery. They have rare books and art. I go once a week. That’s where I found *Sighs and Whispers*, the Guy Bourdin book that inspired the entire content strategy for Violet Grey. It was an insert in *The New York Times* in 1976 for Bloomingdale’s. Changed my life. 554 HUNTLEY DRIVE, L.A. (310) 360-0554; BY APPOINTMENT

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kids." She lowers her voice dramatically. "Just . . . recently . . . divorced. You know—*showbiz*. But he kept asking me to go out." Five dates later, she found herself at a Seventh Avenue tattoo parlor having B.G. inked on the inside of her wrist. She rubs the tattoo, smiling: "It seemed like a big, epic love gesture."

At the couple's 2011 wedding, Sting performed for a guest list that included Tom Cruise and Gwen Stefani. Cassandra wore Naem Khan. "Everyone showed up for that wedding," says the director Joel Schumacher.

While Grey has nothing negative to say about her acceptance in the social circles of L.A., the knives came out after the release of *The Princess of Bel Air*, a video she and a friend made for Italian *Vogue*, in which Grey floated through her manicured estate in a red turban and heavy maquillage, uttering such witticisms as "It's hard to just take the dogs for a walk without thinking about what you're going to wear."

Grey intended the video as both a homage to golden-age Hollywood and a send-up of herself, but any subtleties were lost in translation. The video quickly made its way to industry inboxes all over town. "People were pretty cruel in the beginning," says Schumacher. "I just think Cassandra was naive."

Perhaps it shouldn't have come as a surprise. Cassandra was, after all, the stunning, decidedly younger wife of one of the most powerful men in Hollywood. She was also nakedly open in her pursuit of people who intrigued her—like Sue Mengers, the late, legendary power agent who is the subject of *I'll Eat You Last*, this past spring's acclaimed Broadway play starring Bette Midler. (Grey and Mengers became close after an introduction by Lorne Michaels. "She was the best thing about Hollywood," Grey says, "hands down.")

Grey—whose real-life style is understated rather than flamboyant—now looks at the episode with wry self-deprecation, amazed that anyone would care. "That was a wake-up call: OK, everything I do is going to be watched." She turns quiet. "Of course, it hurts your feelings when you realize there are people who would wish for a refrigerator to fall on your head."

In Violet Grey's Melrose Place

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 664

#### LÔNGMI LASHES

Identical twins from Vietnam, Daniel and Jimmy. They do everyone. Daniel was born to do lashes—he patented his technique.

441 NORTH BEDFORD DR., BEVERLY HILLS, (310) 962-2442

#### CATWALK

It's these two women—real characters. If they like you, they'll take you into the back, which is a wonderland. If you want Madame Grès, they have Madame Grès; if you want red chiffon dresses, they have racks of red chiffon dresses. I've also gotten vintage compacts, perfume dispensers, champagne stirrers.

459 NORTH FAIRFAX AVENUE, L.A. (323) 951-9255

#### DRAGONETTE LTD.

I shop for furniture a lot. Window shop. They have a lot of Hollywood Regency stuff like William Haines and Dorothy Thorpe. I learned about them from Bill Sofield, who did our apartment in New York and our house in L.A.

711 NORTH LA CIENEGA BLVD., L.A. (310) 855-9091

headquarters, feather-trimmed evening dresses hang alongside a light-bedecked vanity; Edith Head costume sketches paper one wall, and Prohibition-era jazz plays on the stereo. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases are piled with volumes on subjects ranging from Lee Radziwill to the history of the eyebrow. Behind Grey's cluttered desk are stacks of boxes bearing labels such as LIPSTICK CASES 1950, OTHER BUNNY MASK, and SILVER DINNER PURSES. It feels more silent film-era boudoir than technology start-up.

In fact, Violet Grey's first iteration was as a styling studio where celebrities, weary of the red-carpet grind, could reinvent their looks and be inspired by times past. Stars, their stylists, and makeup artists would (and still do) draw from her archive of photos, makeup, vintage accessories, and clothing.

"It's the ultimate little girl's dream—like playing in Mom's closet," says Eva Mendes, who worked with Grey on the press tour for *The Place Beyond the Pines*. "The red carpet had become business for me, and Cassandra reminded me why it was fun in the first place."

Grey describes her work with stars as a "crash course" that ultimately led to the launch of Violet Grey. Her site will deliver editorial—The Violet Files—which includes tutorials and behind-the-scenes tips from top makeup artists and hairstylists, guiding women to the very best in beauty, from the cultiest

concealer to Japanese eyelash curlers and French apothecary staples. "We are the consumer. We know what we want—a really tight edit," she says. To be considered for her site, all products must pass muster: "From packaging to performance to staying power. We call it the Violet Code." They must also be items that are genuinely found in a featured makeup artist's kit, or on a starlet's vanity table. "We're only interested in what they're really using."

Violet Grey—named after the color of Elizabeth Taylor's eyes—may ultimately be about selling lipstick, but Grey sees her site as a celebration of a certain kind of womanhood. "It's more about the woman you are in the lipstick rather than just the lipstick." She unearthed photos of Faye Dunaway circa *Network* and a 1955 makeup-test shot of Natalie Wood, and quotes Fellini: "But then she looks at you, and in you there is sun, there is love, there is life."

Grey may be knee-deep in programming code these days, but she still has a flair for the dramatic and madcap—say, bringing a Karl Lagerfeld Tokidoki doll traveling with her (photographing him on the clay courts at Hôtel du Cap; in the pool at the Soho Beach House), or taking the ashes of Sue Mengers shopping in Appleton, Wisconsin, during an emergency stop en route to deliver her remains to friends in New York.

"She still is that girl," says her friend the writer Carole Radziwill. "I thought when she got married and moved to L.A. and this big life, she'd lose some of that, but she didn't."

Twenty years after her infatuation with the Capote swan began, Grey now could be one herself, as she digs into a plate of eggs and sausage at the Polo Lounge, wearing a vintage white Givenchy sweater and a French signet ring that reads BG. She has just returned from New York, where she moved into a new apartment at the Carlyle and attended the *World War Z* premiere with Brad Pitt. She is well aware of her good fortune. After all, there aren't many women who have the ability to make the world of their imagination both their personal reality and their business.

"It's almost like making a movie," Grey says. "You need all of these elements to come together for it to be great. Sometimes it doesn't work—but it's just magic when it does." □ beauty>672