

# THE BEAUTY ISSUE

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# 60

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# GET INTO THE GROOVE

CAMERON DIAZ  
TOUGHENS UP

IN PRADA  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
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**"I'M NOT GOING TO BE THE 23-YEAR-OLD  
INGÉNUÉ AGAIN. IF I TRIED TO HOLD ON TO THAT,  
I'D BE A PRETTY UNHAPPY INDIVIDUAL."**

**—CAMERON DIAZ**



motherhood is a funny subject for Cameron Diaz. "I don't declare either way if I'm going to have children," she says one spring afternoon at the Chateau Marmont. "I don't know what will happen," she adds, with a laugh. "And I'm totally fine with that."

Up close, Diaz's blue eyes seem too bright and light to be anything but color contacts, and her smile, full of shiny white teeth, would give the Joker serious competition for width. All that, combined with her extra long, skinny limbs, makes her look slightly as if her *Shrek* character got stuck in a medi-

eval stretching machine—but in the best way possible.

At 36, Diaz may not be rushing into actual motherhood, but Hollywood has already cast her in it. In her latest film, a drama called *My Sister's Keeper*, she plays a mother for the first time. Indeed, it's a departure from the romantic comedy parts that made her one of the world's most bankable movie stars.

"It's not like doing this movie made me think I'm not loving something as much as I can," says Diaz, insisting that playing a mother didn't make her feel any closer to wanting to become one any time soon.

In the film, an adaptation of a Jodi Picoult best-selling novel, Diaz plays Sara Fitzgerald, the devoted mother of a teenage girl dying of cancer. Her younger daughter, played by Abigail Breslin, was genetically engineered to be a perfect donor match (everything from stem cells to a kidney) to the sick girl, but has decided to become medically emancipated from her parents, with the help of a showboat lawyer played by Alec Baldwin. Diaz's character is fiercely focused—arguably obsessed—with saving her daughter, even at the risk of ruining her marriage (to a man played by Jason Patric) and her relationship with her other kids. Heavy stuff—particularly for an actress best known for dancing and laughing her way across the big screen in blockbusters like *There's Something About Mary* and *Charlie's Angels*.

"I took over that warrior mentality," Diaz says about her role, which she researched by interviewing mothers of sick children. "I don't judge her. I don't know what it's like to be a mother who has a child who is dying of cancer. How do you say, 'you're trying to save your daughter a little too hard?'" Diaz did her best to keep her own life—particularly her devotion to her close-knit Californian family, including her young nieces and nephews—separate from the haunting role. "You try not to impose it on the people you love," she says about the character's circumstances. "That's when it gets scary. You don't even go there."

Director Nick Cassavetes (*The Notebook*) was impressed with the range and determination that Diaz brought to the tough role. "I don't know why other people don't use her in dramatic roles," he says, via cell phone, driving in his convertible through Los Angeles. "She jumped into a part that requires great emotional capacity and the ability to be sympathetic and not be pretty."

Her costar, Sofia Vassilieva, who plays the dying daughter, felt nurtured by Diaz both on and off screen. "Cameron took care of me, fed me Holy Moly Guacamole, held me when I needed to cry, and always made sure I was okay," says Vassilieva, who had to shave her head for the role. In the movie, Diaz also shaves her head—but it was really just a bald cap she wore over her hair during that day of shooting. "She provided this incredible sense of safety and security," adds Vassilieva.

Twirling her hair, Diaz dismisses any notion that she took the role with Oscar hopes, insisting she signed on because she wanted to work with Cassavetes, an old friend. Plus, she wants to move forward in her career by taking challenging roles, rather than trying to direct, produce, or write. This fall, she will also star in *The Box*, a horror film directed by *Donnie Darko*'s Richard Kelly.

"I don't make movies for my ego. I do them for my personal growth and to give something to an audience," says Diaz. "I'm not going to be the 23-year-old ingénue again. If I tried to hold on to that, I'd be a pretty unhappy individual."

Maybe everyone should do a drama about death. It certainly seems to have put Diaz in a good mood. Or maybe she's always like that. What does the woman who has to workout to not get too skinny have to worry about? Sure it's a bummer that she feels like she can't shop or dine out in Los Angeles without getting hassled by the paparazzi, but she tends to bring the party back to her own home, which she's renovating.

"It's going to be such a girl palace for me and my girlfriends to hang out in," she says, implying that she's single, though she won't say for sure. (Previous boyfriends include Justin Timberlake and Jared Leto). "It's going to be dope!"

She had just cleaned out her closet, offering her castoffs to women's shelters, and has held on to some scores she found buried in her own stuff. Such could be considered recession shopping if Diaz, who's always at the top of the Forbes lists, had been affected by the economic crash. (She hasn't). "I have all these badass pants and coats from ten years ago," she says, mentioning a pair of Viktor & Rolf trousers. "I really want to go back to more vintage-y stuff. Not kitschy vintage, but some amazing couture from ten or twenty years ago."

Even though she rarely shops anymore, besides a splurge at Bergdorf's in New York last year, her closets are so full that she's turning one of her bedrooms into a boudoir, where she can properly primp for events. Her reigning favorite red carpet outfit is the borrowed pink Christian Dior gown she wore to this year's Oscars.

When it comes to spending her hard-earned cash on herself, Diaz likes to take her friends on trips and build up her art collection. She recently bought two photographs by Massimo Vitali and often fantasizes about designing a home in Hawaii. She also supports environmental and educational charities. A new cause that she's excited about is the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA).

"For me, it's really about empowerment," she says of her philanthropic choices. "We need to live in a better world where people feel better about themselves." As for how the public views her personal and professional choices, she doesn't really give a damn. "I use my own judgment," she says, sitting up a little straighter. "I don't care how people see me. I know who I am and what I'm capable of." **Deborah Schoeneman**