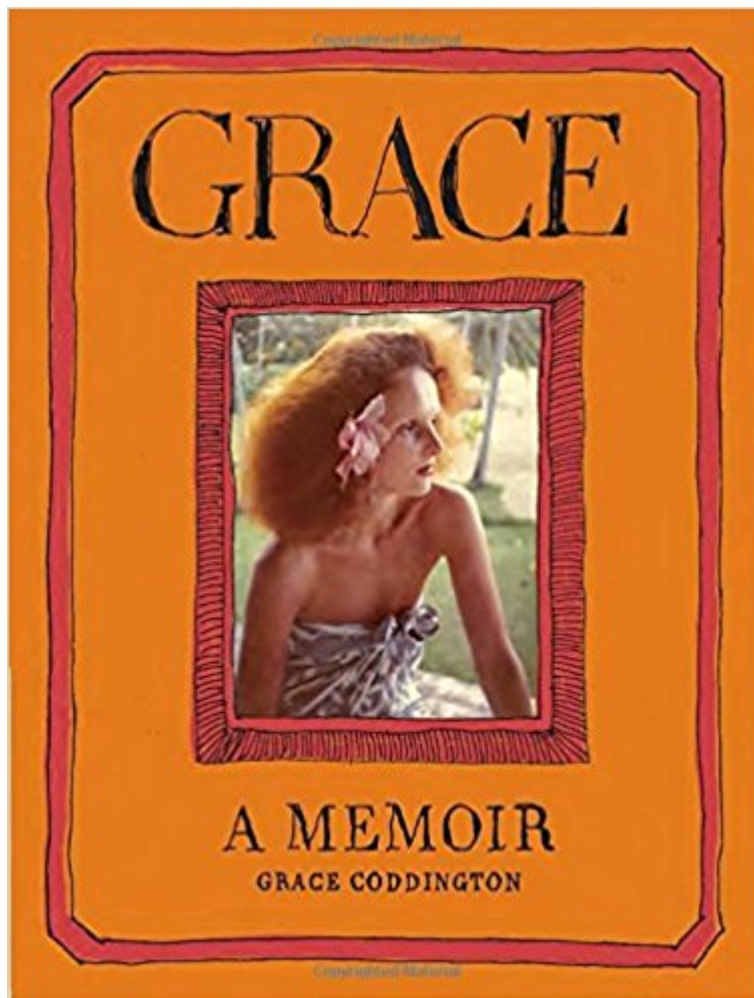


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Grace: A Memoir



Synopsis

Beautiful. Willful. Charming. Blunt. Grace Coddington's extraordinary talent and fierce dedication to her work as creative director of Vogue have made her an international icon. Known through much of her career only to those behind the scenes, she might have remained fashion's best-kept secret were it not for *The September Issue*, the acclaimed 2009 documentary that turned publicity-averse Grace into a sudden, reluctant celebrity. Grace's palpable engagement with her work brought a rare insight into the passion that produces many of the magazine's most memorable shoots. With the witty, forthright voice that has endeared her to her colleagues and peers for more than forty years, Grace now creatively directs the reader through the storied narrative of her life so far. Evoking the time when models had to tote their own bags and props to shoots, Grace describes her early career as a model, working with such world-class photographers as David Bailey and Norman Parkinson, before she stepped behind the camera to become a fashion editor at British Vogue in the late 1960s. Here she began creating the fantasy "travelogues" that would become her trademark. In 1988 she joined American Vogue, where her breathtakingly romantic and imaginative fashion features, a sampling of which appear in this book, have become instant classics. Delightfully underscored by Grace's pen-and-ink illustrations, Grace will introduce readers to the colorful designers, hairstylists, makeup artists, photographers, models, and celebrities with whom Grace has created her signature images. Grace reveals her private world with equal candor—the car accident that almost derailed her modeling career, her two marriages, the untimely death of her sister, Rosemary, her friendship with Harper's Bazaar editor-in-chief Liz Tilberis, and her thirty-year romance with Didier Malige. Finally, Grace describes her abiding relationship with Anna Wintour, and the evolving mastery by which she has come to define the height of fashion. **NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY** *FINANCIAL TIMES* "If Wintour is the Pope . . . Coddington is Michelangelo, trying to paint a fresh version of the Sistine Chapel twelve times a year." *Time*

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Customer Reviews

Coddington, creative director of the American Vogue magazine, has much to impart (which she has done before in *Grace: 30 Years of Fashion at Vogue*, 2002, and *The Catwalk Cats*, 2008).

Fashionistas, rejoice, because not only does she chronicle the life and times of a former model turned editor; she also discusses those whose names appear in any celebrity column—photographers such as Annie Leibovitz and Bruce Weber, models like Naomi Campbell, and the Calvin Klein and French couture mÃ©tres. What saves this from becoming a download of the activities of the rich and famous is, first, her amazing candor. We learn, for instance, that marriages don't agree with her, that her sister Rosemary died of a combination OD—a "hospital malfeasance issue, and that editor-in-chief Anna Wintour is not as portrayed in *The Devil Wears Prada*. And, second, her charming and lively pen-and-ink illustrations grace every chapter—and almost every page. Just what you would ask for from a revered behind-the-scenes magazine editor is what you get here. --Barbara Jacobs

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER—[A] splashy, dishy, very giftable memoir. Charmingly forthright. Coddington's work as an editor does not outglam her youthful adventure stories. But it's at the heart of this book, and she presents it with both passion and whimsy. • "Janet Maslin, *The New York Times Book Review*—Coddington has a winning voice and admirable common sense. Who wouldn't want to spend a few hours in her company anyway? • "The New York Observer—If you have a stylist (or stylists) on your list, buy this book. • "Toronto Star—Grace is candid, but not salacious—if no gloves come off, it's because Coddington never wore any in the first place. [Grace unfolds] in a very conversational, matter-of-fact manner. Coddington isn't shy about speaking her mind on industry issues. But she also reveals some of the tenderness and friendship behind all the air-kissing. • "Nathalie Atkinson, *National Post*—Worth a read for the name-dropping alone. • "Los Angeles Times—This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grace's memoir is a little like movies that can't figure out what they want to be and the tone flip flops around, never sticking to one. Coddington clearly has had an amazing life and she shows us a slice of cultural history from the inside and if you are interested in the fashion/modeling world during the early days, you will enjoy the book. However, her personal life is woven in and out of her professional life in a very uneven fashion. She glosses over the most painful parts of her life, but then delves a tiny bit deeper into other parts so you think you're going to get a juicy memoir sometimes, but you never do. Her reporting of the early days is extensive and interesting, as we move into the current day, she gets less detailed and less interesting. We don't anything about how she really felt about almost anything. It's very detached except when she's talking about how she drew her eyeliner and her cats. In fact, her most passionate and bizarre chapter is all about her cats and to what lengths she goes to in order to take care of them. We get more info on the cats than on her infertility or feelings about it. I did enjoy the parts about the early days of modern modeling, but overall it's just ok. I think the rating system is jacked for making three stars "it's ok" and one star "I hated it" so I'm giving it two stars because it's not that great and it left me with a little sour taste in my mouth. If she really didn't want her personal life in the book, then she should have and could have taken it out and focused on the professional side and made it a stronger book.

I don't say this often about famous people, but Grace seems to have the type of personality that I could be in synch with. In the fashion world of drama queens and snooty people, Grace seems to keep her feet planted firmly on the ground. Though she is head creative director to one of the most important fashion publications in the world, she still attends the Met Ball in flats and little, if any, makeup. Coddington's writing style is quite approachable and easy reading. It would help to be familiar with the fashion world (designers, supermodels, and photographers). She shares many anecdotes about many of these people which could be done in a tasteless manner, but Coddington stays true and respectful. One of my favorite stories is when Anna Wintour (Editor in Chief at American VOGUE) had a cake made with a rendering of Grace on it. Anna, not pleased with the likeness of the rendering, stuck her signature famous sunglasses into cake to make the portrait of Grace more appealing. Soooo Anna. Another part of the book I love is Coddington's whimsical sketches scattered throughout the book which gave the book a personal touch that is rare to find in memoirs today. Grace also talks a bit about her creative processes, not in the depth that I usually like to pick an artist's brain usually by, but it's there: from her early days as a Vidal Sassoon model, to her days making errors working for Calvin Klein, to her current post at American VOGUE. It's nice to

get to know the faces behind the magic that touches millions of lives every day. Kudos Grace!

I don't often read memoirs because I'm not exactly too interested in other people's real lives (which is why I more often turn to fiction). But I must say Grace Coddington swept me off my feet. I don't agree with some of the other reviewers that her writing is poor and uninteresting. Sure, it's not the most sophisticated language I've ever read, but it's not supposed to be a dissertation but an encapsulation of the others' voice, which I think was captured perfectly. At first I wasn't sure if her life was fit for a memoir but it definitely was. Grace Coddington is an amazing character and this book just proves that her life is worthy of being put in writing. It's entertaining, fast-paced and focused on the magazine world but anyone who picks up a copy knows that her profession dictates her life story (or anyone who has watched "The September Issue"- I highly recommend it). Don't buy this book if you're looking for a dry historical artifact like most other memoirs because you won't find it here. This memoir has a vivacious life of its own that's contained within it but it certainly isn't a historical transcript of Grace Coddington. It's an entertaining and easy read, in a good way.

A lot of the world was introduced to Grace Coddington when the movie, The September Issue, came out about how Vogue puts the greatest issue of the year together. But, if you are a Vogue fanatic (like me) and have access to the internet (like me), you know who the woman behind the vision of the fashion editorials at Vogue is. This is her story. I started out by listening to it as she read and had to buy the book. This woman...this ICON of fashion has been everywhere, done everything and met everyone. She is so humble and it comes through in this book. I've been amazed by her fashion editorial spreads for years but to hear how she decides what to do, how to dress the models, how she wants them to stand, etc. is fascinating. Her early years as a model and the things she's been through in her life make her even more down to earth. I so admire her and all she's done. Keep on keeping on, Grace. I hope you have many more years to make your magic at Vogue.

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