

ALL THAT GLITTERS

CARA DELEVINGNE's life may look glossy but, as the model, actress and now author explains, she's come a long way – and her new book will show those struggling, like she did, that they are not alone. By ANNABEL BROG

*Photographs by ALEXANDRA NATAF
Styling by ILONA HAMER*



Previous page: Dress by Proenza Schouler; boots by Giuseppe Zanotti
This page: Blazer by Saint Laurent; all rings throughout Cara's own



“If I fail at something, it’s the worst thing in the world because I never forgive myself,” Cara Delevingne says thoughtfully. It started at school. “I didn’t feel like I was ever good enough. The fact I couldn’t do as well as other people made me hate myself. And you’re made to feel that once you get a mark, like a ‘C’, that’s your mark in life; that’s you as a human being. That really sat with me for a long time.”

Such censure makes her latest venture – she has written a YA book, *Mirror, Mirror*, published next week – all the more surprising. It seems a pretty high-risk exercise for an academically insecure model-turned-actress given to emotional self-flagellation. So, why do it to herself?

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Delevingne was born into financial privilege (her father, Charles, a successful property developer, and her mother, Pandora, a former socialite from a well-connected family, raised her in London’s affluent Belgravia neighborhood) and her current net worth is rumored to be \$18m, so she’s not chasing financial security. “I’ve always had a good understanding of money because of my father,” says the 25-year-old. “He was always very respectful of money – not to throw it around, and not to hold on to it too much.”

She’s not looking for mass adulation, either – she doesn’t understand the allure of fame. “It’s a game you’ll never win,” she explains easily. “It’s not something that you’re ever going to succeed at. People who want to be famous are never going to get to a place of ‘I’m proud of myself.’”

And she certainly doesn’t need further accolades: as a model, she fronted campaigns for Chanel, Burberry and Saint Laurent before segueing into acting, scoring the villain role in last year’s *Suicide Squad*, the lead in the film

adaptation of John Green's *Paper Towns*, and the coveted part of Laureline in cult director Luc Besson's sci-fi blockbuster *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* (for which she recorded a song on the soundtrack, too).

In fact, this is probably the *worst* time for Delevingne to publish a book. The path of high-profile model to credible actress never did run smooth, and the rulebook advises that, at this critical point in proceedings, she should hunker down to focus on building dramatic gravitas and box-office success. So, really, why do it?

Firstly, "I was never very good at following rules," Delevingne says slowly, with the careful consideration she gives all of her answers. Secondly, with success has come confidence and the desire to prove certain people wrong: "I'm talking about mean, critic-type people who don't know my work that well, and don't want to know. [To them] I'm seen everywhere, I'm privileged, and they don't want to believe that I can actually do something else.


"I always FELT pretty weird and different as a kid. Being a TEENAGER felt like being on a rollercoaster to HELL"

Which I understand, I get it, but I want to earn their respect. And if I have to work harder to get it, then so be it."

Thirdly, and most importantly, *Mirror, Mirror* is a book Delevingne says she *needed* to write. It is a whodunnit with a brilliant and unexpected mid-story twist, but predominantly it is remarkable for its heartbreaking depiction of four teenagers who all identify as misfits. Their alienation reads brutally authentic because, despite the fact that characters Red, Leo, Naomi and Rose are not all rich, beautiful and popular like their creator, she has lived their loneliness in her head.

"I always felt pretty weird and different as a kid, and that feeling was something I didn't understand,



A full-page photograph of Cara Delevingne. She is wearing a black, long-sleeved, ribbed turtleneck top and a silver sequined skirt. Her hair is short and blonde, and she is looking off to the side with a serious expression. Her right arm is raised behind her head, and her left hand is on her hip. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Top by Jil Sander; waist belt by Oscar de la Renta; hoop earring by Miu Miu (sold as set); other earrings throughout a Cara's own

or know how to express,” says Delevingne. *Mirror, Mirror* is her chance to tell a whole generation of teenagers that it will all be OK. “I wish I could have given myself a hug. I wish I’d known that I was still in there somewhere, that I wasn’t my own worst enemy, that I wasn’t trapped. That if you can hold on for dear life – because being a teenager can feel like you’re on a rollercoaster to hell, that’s what it honestly felt like to me – you can get through it. Time moves on, feelings pass, it does get better.”

Delevingne grew up the adored baby of the family (sisters Chloe and Poppy are now 32 and 31) but, she says, she always felt different. “If I wore the clothes that I liked, with my

“Friends would say, ‘You’re so LUCKY.’ But there was SOMETHING DARK within me I couldn’t seem to shake”

short hair, everyone would think that I was a boy. I hated it. Even though I looked like a boy and acted like a boy, I wasn’t a boy,” she says. “And when people said [to my parents], ‘Oh, your son is so handsome,’ I would think, how dare you say that! Like, why was I seen as a boy?” She trails off. “It wasn’t like I was an alien, but I definitely knew there was something weird going on.”

The feeling of otherness increased as she moved through adolescence. “When I tried to talk to people about it, they wouldn’t want to understand. So many of my friends would say: ‘How can you feel like that?’ and, ‘But you’re so lucky,’ and I’d be like: I know, trust me, I know. I know I’m the luckiest girl in the world, I understand all of these things, and I wish I could appreciate it. There is just something dark within me I cannot seem to shake.

“And teenagers can be very, very cruel. I wasn’t into the same things that all my popular friends were,” she continues. “I was a very late developer. I didn’t have boobs or start my period till very late. And

that whole thing of being called frigid, and being flat-chested... I felt alienated and alone, because I was like: What's wrong with me? I always wanted people to love me, so I never got angry with them; I turned my anger onto myself. Instead of using [my] sword and shield [to protect myself], I just put my shield up and stabbed myself." She acts it out.

At 15 she had a breakdown and was pulled out of school to receive treatment. "I hated myself for being depressed, I hated feeling depressed, I hated feeling," she recalls. "I was very good at disassociating from emotion completely. And all the time I was second-guessing myself, saying something and then hating myself for saying it. I didn't understand what was happening apart from the fact that I didn't want to be alive anymore."

While *Mirror, Mirror* reflects teenagers' feelings of self-loathing and the need to belong, it is also notable how awful all of the parents in the book are –

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neglectful, judgmental, prejudiced, abusive, addicted. Delevingne adores her own parents, and the book is written from a teen's perspective, so it's not personally significant, as she explains, "All teenagers love to blame their parents for everything." But Delevingne's own mother struggled with addiction when her daughters were young, and the anger of one character towards an alcoholic mother can't be entirely fictional.

"I don't want to talk too much about me and my parents' relationship," says Delevingne slowly. "I love them deeply and I wouldn't be who I am without them. Maybe because of things I experienced or saw, I knew my childhood was slightly different to other kids. [But] parents, unless



Blazer and pants by Rachel Zoe; sandals by Miu Miu



*This page: Dress by
J.W.Anderson
Opposite: Dress and
boots by Saint Laurent*



Dress by Magda
Butrym; boots by
Balenciaga



they're really, really bad, love their children, and that is what I am trying to portray in my book. Of course when you grow up with any alcoholic or depressive there is going to be darkness, but I wanted to show the inner workings of it. The thing about alcoholism, addiction and depression is, you can't hate the person for being who they are, you can hate the disease behind it."

Mirror, Mirror may well become the most influential thing Delevingne has ever done because, to her legions of followers on social media, her voice is more relevant than her haircut or her latest tattoo. In fact, her approach to social platforms has been game

"I was always in love with my BEST friends. But if someone got close, I got SCARED. I relied too much on LOVE"

changing: while most people use it to airbrush their reality into something cooler and glossier, she prefers to show the goofy, unfiltered version, although she has learned to hold some things back: "You have to put a wall up otherwise you do feel like you're strung up for people to throw rocks at," she says.

She also needs to make sure she's not 'on' all the time. "Sometimes I forget and that voice comes back, that self-hatred: 'You'll never be good enough'; 'You're fake'; 'You're a f***** idiot'; 'You're stupid'; 'You're shallow'... any bad thing that you could possibly say about yourself. But that comes from me not checking in with myself."

Today, Delevingne is happy; a state she has worked hard for and roundly deserves. She is careful to ensure the people around her are genuine and kind, having been bruised in the past by assuming that people on her payroll were also her friends, looking after her best interests. And she isn't chasing after love: past romances include actress Michelle Rodriguez

and St. Vincent singer Annie Clark, but Delevingne says she has been on her own for over a year now.

“At the moment, it’s just being in a relationship with myself,” she says, slightly embarrassed. “I was always in love with my best friends, the person I would call if something was wrong, the person that I talked to about everything.

But when someone gets too close, I get scared: ‘Oh, you can’t handle it, I’m too crazy.’ I know it sounds really stupid, but I relied too much on love, too much on other people to make me happy, and I needed to learn to be happy by myself. So now I can be by myself, I can be happy. It took me a long time.”

Mirror, Mirror includes some disturbingly homophobic passages, but Delevingne says these were not drawn from her own experience, although she has felt the ripple effect. “I was with a partner somewhere [where people] are quite homophobic and she said, ‘Don’t touch me because we could be hate-crimed.’ I was like, I will have this fight. If I’m going to be hate-crimed, then at least I have something to fight against.”

*“If I’m going to be
HATE-crimed [for my
sexuality], at least I
have SOMETHING to
fight AGAINST”*

And happiness in the future? Understandably, given all she has achieved, it is not defined by success – Delevingne fantasises about the simple life.

“I want to have a farm, live on a beach, get my driver’s license. And I’m like, ‘Ooh, am I going to get married, is that something I believe in?’ I want kids – I know I’m going to have kids. I can’t wait [to have] that love. Those are the boxes I want to tick. But I haven’t set times, they’re just dreams.”

In the meantime, there will be more films, more books and more living in the moment. Which, for Delevingne, is all the happiness she needs right now.

Mirror, Mirror is out Oct 5

SHOP CARA’S SHOOT ▶



Jacket by Jacquemus;
top by Pallas; boots by
Jimmy Choo