

TOWN & COUNTRY

MARCH 2021



The LONG GAME

79 Things Worth
Waiting For



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Michelle
PFEIFFER
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SANDALS (\$1,175); **POMELLATO**
CHOKER (\$9,980) AND RINGS
(FROM \$2,360); **HAUTE**
VICTOIRE BROOCH (\$5,800);
ANTIPAST SOCKS. OPPOSITE:
SALVATORE FERRAGAMO
FLATS (\$675)



TO ALL
THE CLOTHES
We
Loved
BEFORE

...and will wear yet again: *Spring is coming.*

BY SARAH BROWN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBBIE FIMMANO STYLED BY DANIA LUCERO ORTIZ



GIORGIO ARMANI
MILANO

T

he last beautiful thing I bought, pre-pandemic, was a black double-breasted Stella McCartney tuxedo jacket with sharp lapels and a decadent silken fringe that dangles, almost shimmering, from the bottom edge. It's the kind of thing you can toss on with a pair of slim cigarette pants and Manolo Blahnik BB 105s and hit the cocktail circuit, or mix with a top and the right jeans for a dinner party, or throw over the shoulders of a floor-sweeping gown and slink out to a black-tie. It's one of those forever pieces that is so smart and versatile, so beautifully made and timeless, that it's a true wardrobe workhorse, well worth what was, if memory serves, a rather steep price.

When I brush past it accidentally in my closet these days—on those rare occasions when I'm looking for something to wear that requires a hanger—my fingers run through the fine, tassel-like frills as if they're passing through water. The fringe sways gently, reminding me what it might be like to dash after a taxi again, late to an event uptown, or balance atop a pair of needle-heel stilettos while navigating purposefully through a restaurant on the way to a table of friends.

Like most everyone, I haven't thought about fashion with a capital F much over the past year. The world changed, and our priorities did too. Quarantine proved to be a time of recalibration on pretty much every front. Fashionwise, it required a meditation on not only where we would be in the future and what we might want or need, but *who* we would be.

During lockdown I lost certain aspects of myself, but found others. A pared-down approach to smart, uncomplicated dressing was emerging as a practical way forward during uncertain times. Comfort, quality, thoughtfulness, and sustainability—in both craftsmanship and enduring style—emerged as new expressions of luxury.

And my commitment to athleisure (and actual exercise, depending on the day) seemed to be sticking; my new uniform of sporty separates made me feel sleek and efficient. Athletic, even. Still, what struck me as missing, long-term, was a different kind of pleasure: of getting not just dressed but dressed up.

There is a difference between clothing and fashion. While clothing tends toward the utilitarian (and trust me, no one was loving ►►►)



PRADA CAPE (\$3,550) AND SLINGBACKS; WOLFORD TIGHTS (\$67).
OPPOSITE: EMILIA WICKSTEAD TOP (\$990) AND SKIRT (\$2,710); GIORGIO
ARMANI LA PRIMA COLLECTION HANDBAG (\$1,495); MUNNU THE GEM PALACE
EARRINGS AND RING; POMELLATO RING (\$7,800)



washable knits more than I), fashion is about the dream. It allows us to insert ourselves into the dream and make it real. I was grateful I'd given myself permission to take a (mostly) judgment-free time-out, but I was starting to miss the idea in my mind, tied inextricably to how I presented myself in the world, of who I was.

With nowhere to go, particularly, the notion of getting properly dressed again was difficult to envision, but a perfect pink coat from Prada brought me back with a jolt, as if someone had plugged me back in again.

It was a blush-tone cloud shown on model Anok Yai during the digital mid-quarantine presentation billed by Mrs. Prada as the Show That Never Happened. It looked, through my computer's screen, cozy and soft. It was generously cut, but it had beautiful lines and shape, almost like a cocoon. Knee-length, simple, something you could move in. It was the color of spun sugar clouds in a Will Cotton painting.


This unexpected icy pastel could be—and would be, once I got my hands on it—absorbed into my wardrobe as a neutral, perfect with the palette of grays, ivories, and oatmeals I favored. It would be my new staple, and it struck me as having a kind of decadent practicality: I didn't need much, but I did need this. It would add a special flourish for evening; it would be the perfect layering piece for day. It would be great with a dress, with bare legs or stockings. It was tailor-made for a date. I'd never have to hunt for it in a cloakroom. Plus, how can you not walk down the street smiling when you're wearing a coat the exact shade of a Ladurée rose petal macaron? It is impossible.

My brain was working overtime, mentally cataloging everything I owned, everything I now needed (naturally), and all that I could do with this magical garment.

The world may be a mess, but this little pink coat made me want to venture into it again. Everything came rushing back. The pleasure of getting dressed. The expression of personal style, and the recognition that fashion is about not just how you look but how you feel.

I was reminded that the best fashion has the power to tug at your heart with its beauty and set your mind racing with ideas of all the places you'll go in it and the things you'll do. It speaks to us, and we instantly respond, saying to ourselves, yup, that's it. That's me. **T&C**

BROCK COLLECTION CAMISOLE (\$650) AND SKIRT (\$1,340); **ARAKS** BRALETTE (\$103); **MIU MIU** SLINGBACKS (\$1,100); **LOUIS VUITTON** HANDBAG (\$23,100); **REINSTEIN ROSS** CHAIN (\$1,200) AND RINGS (FROM \$4,950); **ELIZABETH LOCKE** PENDANT (\$5,125); **POMELLATO** BANGLE (FROM \$6,675); **DAVID YURMAN** PINKIE RING (\$4,500). OPPOSITE: **BROCK COLLECTION** CARDIGAN (\$1,200); **ALBERTA FERRETTI** BRALETTE (\$395); **ERDEM** SKIRT (\$1,560) AND BOW; **NICK FOUQUET** HAT (\$1,325); **CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE** HANDBAG (\$2,200); **AGENT PROVOCATEUR** BODY CHAIN (\$1,095); **ELIZABETH LOCKE** BRACELET (\$14,050). FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 109



Long a haven for artists, from Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church in the 19th century to Lyle Ashton Harris and Justin Vivian Bond today, the Hudson Valley and its creative community have inspired a new local Shangri-La, the 11-room boutique hotel the Maker, where this story was photographed.

THEMAKER.COM



EVGENY LEBEDEV

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 87] shares. Security goons in balaclavas raided his offices while the oligarch relaxed in a basement swimming pool. At his lowest point Alexander considered suicide. “One morning I opened my eyes and realized I didn’t want to go on living,” he writes in his memoir.

In 2011, when he punched a developer in the face during a televised debate, Alexander was arrested and sentenced to 150 hours of community service, narrowly escaping a prison sentence. State TV showed him sweeping the streets. The humiliation was enough, and the Lebedevs made it through the crisis as mere millionaires. Alexander, who has always been careful not to criticize Putin directly, has since been supportive of the president, backing, for example, Russia’s 2014 annexation of Crimea.

In London, Evgeny has shown similar caution while courting power. In 2015 David Cameron invited him to stay at Chequers, the country house used by British leaders. In an uproarious diary published last year, Sasha Swire, wife of Hugo Swire, a former British senior foreign minister, recalled meeting a taciturn Lebedev that weekend. “Hugo reckons his mysteriousness is all about his loneliness, and he does strike you as a Gatsby figure,” she wrote. “What I do find extraordinary, and have to pinch myself slightly, is how he has managed to penetrate the very core of the English political establishment by buying a newspaper.”

The media baron’s relationship with Boris Johnson only grew closer. In 2018, by which time he had become foreign secretary, Johnson was observed looking disheveled while waiting for a flight back from one of Lebedev’s Italian parties, apparently without luggage or personal security. Johnson declined to discuss the trip when it was reported.

The *Evening Standard* backed Johnson’s successful campaign to become prime minister. The day after his election victory, in December 2019, Johnson and his fiancée Carrie Symonds attended a 60th birthday party for Alexander that Evgeny was throwing with

his father at his Regent’s Park home. Evgeny learned he was being appointed to the House of Lords the following month.

The appointment was controversial. “It just shows how cronyish and corrupt London has become, that despite all of our high-minded talk of ‘Global Britain’ and human rights, basically we are fast becoming Monaco with lousy weather,” says Luke Harding, a former Moscow correspondent for the *Guardian* and author of *Shadow State*, a book about modern Russia’s influence in the West.

Last October, Harding reported in the *Guardian* that the committee that scrutinizes appointments to the House of Lords had asked the prime minister to think again about Lebedev. The committee was alarmed, Harding reported, by a confidential briefing from the UK’s security services that viewed Lebedev as a security risk because of his father’s links to Moscow as a prominent businessman and former spy.

The appointment was approved in the end. A spokesman for the prime minister defended it, citing Lebedev’s “outstanding contribution to the UK.” Lebedev laughs at the suggestion that he’s a security risk. “It’s kind of staggering, really, that I would be even considered [a risk] simply because of my father’s old job,” he says. He also refutes cries of cronyism, expressing pride—and patriotism—as the first Russian lord, especially “when relations between our countries are probably at their worst since the end of the Cold War.”

Yet despite Evgeny’s credentials as a pro-democracy, campaigning journalist, his shyness suddenly returns when I ask if he is prepared to criticize Putin over the causes of the new freeze—the poisoning of political opponents, for example. “I leave that to the journalists,” he says, before hinting, without elaboration, that he might address the issue from his perch in parliament.

Otherwise, Lebedev hopes to represent his interests at Westminster, including animal conservation and press freedom. He was a little disappointed that his introduction to a nearly empty House of Lords was a quiet affair thanks to Covid restrictions.

“They said you could reenact the ceremony when things go back to normal, but I think maybe that ship has sailed,” he says. “That would be even more surreal.” He will throw a party when he can. In an era of unprecedented turbulence, only two things will be certain: The champagne will be expensive, and Boris Johnson will be invited. **T&C**

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