



Suite 515 at the Crillon: Karlie slinks into sapphire pyjamas and her sumptuous velvet bed before the carousel of fittings and shows starts again
Silk pyjama set, *personalised by stylist*, £420, Equipment, at Net-a-Porter.com

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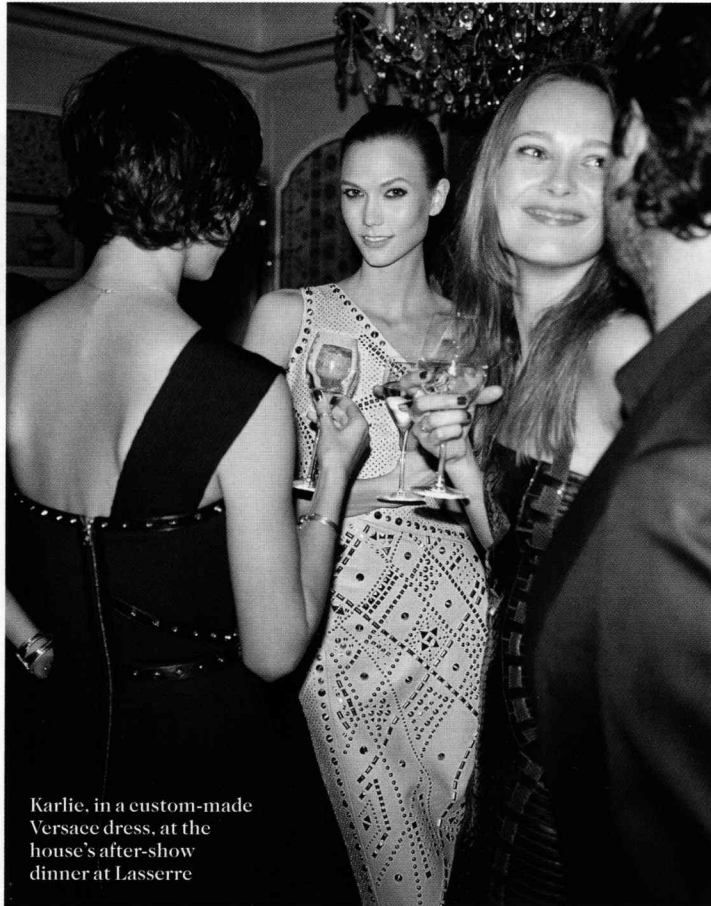
hat nose clip must have been made for someone with a different nose to mine,” remarks Karlie Kloss, looking at the edit of the day’s shoot and one image of her wearing a Givenchy sequined dress, ginormous silver and crystal earrings and a nose ring that looks like a museum piece from Rajasthan. “It was *very* heavy,” says Kloss, diplomatically pointing to her tiny, perfect, button nose that sits sweetly on her heart-shaped face, with its cupid lips, angular eyebrows and steep cheekbones.

Riccardo Tisci’s ethno-chic accessories are just one hint of exotica in a fantasy world of fashion that Karlie Kloss is modelling, on the catwalk, as well as backstage, and around the environs of the legendary Hôtel de Crillon for *Vogue* during Paris couture week. The “off-duty, on-duty” shoot concept has taken weeks in the planning, with photographer Angelo Pennetta and *Vogue*’s fashion editor, Francesca Burns, shooting around Karlie’s fittings, shows and downtime, from breakfast through to midnight over five days.

Every bit of space in the hotel bedroom, which is being used as base camp, is jam-packed with fantastical designs, from the hilariously brilliant (a gold Maison Martin Margiela trench coat, hand-appliquéd with lacquered recycled champagne-bottle labels), to the dreamy and divine (a Dior ballgown, created from layers and layers of tulle in graduated flurries of white, grey, black). Boxes of lingerie – strapless bras, thongs, seamless wonders, you name it – are neatly stacked on the floor. Outside the bedroom, there is a line up of shaven-headed security guards – some for the endless shuttling of the dresses, others to ensure the safe transit of precious jewellery. The *Vogue* cache currently includes an exquisite Chanel diamond tiara worth many pretty millions.

“Look, there are 10 of us here. We can take them on! I’ll take the back stairs and meet you outside,” jests Karlie of the impossible yet momentarily thrilling idea of a *Pink Panther*-style heist. In her Hôtel de Crillon bathrobe and slippers, Karlie would probably make it as far as the lift. As for the Belize rainforest retreat? Never. Arguably, with a career that is rocketing, contracts with Dior Beauty and Victoria’s Secret, Kloss (who is only 19) is quite capable of investing in gems herself. But for a model who is habitually in jeans, big hand-knitted sweaters, hoodies and boots (she’s into a sort of Seventies Veruschka look right now), a tiara might be a bit *de trop*.

During spring 2012 couture week, Karlie



Karlie, in a custom-made Versace dress, at the house’s after-show dinner at Lasserre

has had to don many “hats”. Couture is about the projection of dreams, and Karlie clearly enjoys creating that halo. She has dressed *à la* Amy Winehouse, in a shimmering black-and-red bugle-beaded sheath skirt, leather jacket and bouffant hair, for Jean Paul Gaultier in his controversial “tribute” collection to the singer. Striding down the runway, she wagged her finger and mouthed the “No! No! No!” refrain of “Rehab” with just the right degree of playfulness. She has also played the part of princess, sporting a demure ivory ensemble at Valentino and exuding good breeding and grace, while at

Dior she assumed the role of a flirtatious debutante in a belted organza dress with a tiny, tiny waist.

“I’ve developed such an appreciation of this level of work,” says the 5ft 11in wonder, who was rarely out of her ballet kit or jeans and trainers as a child growing up in St Louis, Missouri. “It’s a much more luxurious pace than ready-to-wear, and the collections are stunning. I go for two fittings for each look, so I get to see all the work – the real art of the making. At the Valentino fitting, there were probably six lovely ladies, all in their sixties and seventies, and all wearing their white atelier coats and glasses. One of these ladies might have spent more than 40 hours on a piece, with 3,000 hand-stitched embroidery knots,” Karlie says with professional aplomb. “That’s the thing you get to experience from my perspective – seeing a collection before the rest of the world and helping to evoke the feeling, the emotion that the designer is trying to inspire. It’s not just about walking.”

It’s rare to hear a model talk with such intelligence. Karlie is relishing her couture education, adding words such as “embellishment” and “flou” to her soft-toned Midwestern vocabulary. Her discovery, aged 13, at a charity fashion show in St Louis, by Mother Model Management founders Jeff and Mary Clarke, must seem an aeon ago. (She started professional work at the age of 15.)

As Karlie sits patiently, wrapped in her bathrobe with eyebrows and eyeliner being tweaked, she is a figure of composure. She asks questions, challenges respectfully (always prefacing her opinions with “from my experience...”), and

adds many a lighthearted quip to the strange ebb and flow of conversation that accompanies fashion shoots. The banter swerves from how brilliant is *Shit Fashion Girls Say* (a cult Youtube fashion satire) to the delights of baking (Karlie makes cookies and cakes with a passion and a big Tupperware box of cookies keeps on being offered around the shoot) and the landscape of Berlin. Nothing ever gets too meaty or heated, it just wafts by in a pleasant, impressionistic haze.

“I had an hour before my flight after the Hugo Boss show last week in > 164

Berlin, so I got an express tour with a driver. I was like click, click, click with my iPhone. It was so interesting to see the difference in architecture between the east and the west... It's a bizarre city, intriguing," says Kloss, musing on her drive-by glimpse of the German capital.

"For me, it's refreshing to be in one place for a long time; I have to get creative and make the most of everything. When I first started modelling I was 15, and because of the labour laws that only allow you to work a certain number of hours a day, I had so much more time. It was amazing – I would have my family with me and the first season in Paris we went to Disneyland, to Versailles, to the Louvre – now, I can't even go to the bathroom without someone calling me!" Such is the downside of success and fame, the reality and scale of which Kloss is just getting used to. "At the last shows, I rode by the Stella McCartney venue at L'Opéra in sweaty gym clothes with my headphones on early in the morning and I was chased by the paparazzi. I have to be more careful!" Now, she has a personal trainer, who sets the exercise routes and the agenda.

Karlie, who trained as a ballet dancer, has an extraordinary body – superbly long limbs, a lithe angular frame and a long neck. She was too tall to take up ballet professionally. "En pointe! Can you imagine? The academy could not find anyone to dance next to me. *Minor detail!*"

But it was not until last year, after intense training, that she turned her physique into something extraordinary. She has been dubbed "the body", inheriting the moniker from Elle Macpherson. "That gives me goosebumps." As Tim Walker (who has shot Kloss for *Vogue*) attests: "She knows every single joint and pose, and she intuitively knows how to be a part of a picture, not just to pose in front of it. That's very rare. She's also very sweet, with that exquisite Bo-Peepness."

Her ballet feet did cause a bit of a problem to begin with. She used to walk like a duck with her feet in first position and was promptly cancelled from one show in her first season. "At Prada, the casting director [Russell Marsh] made me practise and practise until my feet turned in." Even with the walk corrected, there has been rejection to deal with. "You are physically up for scrutiny by everyone and you hear

everyone's opinion. You have to grow a thick skin, and that only comes with time and learning. You are not going to be right for all – and nor should you be.

"The younger girls look at me now in the way that I did to Daria Werbowy, Gemma Ward and Natalia Vodianova when I was a 'baby'. Lily Donaldson, Coco Rocha, Sasha Pivovarova – they all really looked out for me. I learnt a lot from them; how they interacted with designers and with each other, how they dressed and carried themselves. Now, in a short space of time, I've become the 'older sister' – that's kind of crazy. It does not seem that long ago, but fashion is quick," says Karlie clicking her fingers. "One year is like a dog year."

Backstage at Valentino, staged at the Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild, Karlie skips up the ornate staircase of the elegant neoclassical building, and models do indeed look up to her. "Can we meet for dinner in New York? I *soo* need to talk," says one gazelle. "I'd *soo* love that,"

smiles Karlie.

For the first time, she is not accompanied in Paris by members of her close-knit family (two younger sisters – twins – and an older one). "Karlie has a big commitment to her family," says Versae Vanni, booking director at Next Models in Paris. "She invited them to participate, and they are as important to her as we are as agents.

There would always be

that call: 'Can you please, please get my grandma/sister in to the show?'"

She puts her strong sense of self down to her family and upbringing. Her father is an emergency-room doctor, her mother an artist. And then there's that magic ingredient: the smalltown Missouri upbringing, which offers a bucolic picture of America that – post-Madoff meltdown – seems nostalgic and dreamy.

Writer Derek Blasberg, one of Karlie's close friends, is from the same town. "I adore St Louis," he says. "It's a friendly, slow-moving town in the middle of the country, and is, by all counts, exactly what you think of when you think of the Midwest. People are caring, trusting and honest. They leave their doors unlocked and say hi in the street. But more importantly, it's one of those American enclaves that still teaches good manners, self-respect and all that other stuff that is missing in other parts of the world. I think that's one of the reasons Karlie has had such a good head

on her shoulders, despite her meteoric success – all of which has happened while she's still a teenager. Let's be honest: this industry can mess a girl up when she's 15 years old, but it's a testament to the sort of girl Karlie is – and was raised to be – that she's still the sweetest, smiliest young woman I know. This Christmas she sent me the most delicious toffee with a handwritten card. A home-cooked Christmas present and a thoughtful note – that's very Missouri, darling."

For a while Karlie lived a double life, flying off to shoots and fashion weeks while keeping up with her studies. "Those roots allowed me to disappear for a week and go back to chemistry class; the two paths never crossed. I was fortunate that I could have a normal experience back home." Now that she has graduated, she's a free bird, but she keeps schtum about boyfriends. There's many a rumour about Leonardo DiCaprio. "At the moment, I'm keeping it light. The schedule is tough on relationships."

Following her graduation in May 2011, she did, however, have a date (Gabe Smith, a best friend since childhood) for her prom dance – and a glamorous tangerine-orange Dior gown to wear. The duo – she towering above 5ft 6in Smith – made the lead photo story in the local paper, *St Louis Today*. "Karlie's Kapers" ran the headline and the copy continued: "Smith, 17, who makes his money mowing lawns, umpiring baseball games and dog-sitting, insisted on buying Kloss's ticket to the prom and drove them in his father's '07 Ford Fusion four-door sedan. They left Kloss's silver Land Rover, which she bought for herself, at home in the driveway." Her other home is now New York, where she lives with her elder sister. Her close social set includes designer Jason Wu (they love going bowling) and London model Jourdan Dunn.

It's midnight, and we are all squeezed into her blue bedroom for the balcony image of her wearing Gaultier. Playing the rebel beauty, rather than the prom queen, she puts on a pout and little scowl. Her room is scarily tidy. Sweat pants are neatly folded on a chair next to an untouched courtesy bowl of fruit and a bottle of champagne. On the desk is a neatly tied plastic bag of cereal bars, a tiny gold ring bearing the peace sign and some sharply folded receipts, and on the floor lies a rucksack. The only sign of fashion showiness is a black quilted Miss Dior handbag.

As Karlie poses on the balcony against a storm-laden sky, instinctively and rapidly moving her frame, raising one of those sharply pointed eyebrows, you do think: what a wonderful life. ■

"You have to grow a thick skin, and that only comes with time and learning"

Fittings at Karl's atelier are a private affair, but Karlie is welcomed in her white silk tulle gown and cap-sleeved top, embroidered with the palest blue "petal" sequins

Opposite: cap-sleeved top adorned with flowers, to order. Strapless organza dress embroidered with sequins and flowers in a cascading effect, to order. Both Chanel Haute Couture, Paris

At Hôtel d'Evreux, it takes two skilled Givenchy seamstresses to help Karlie into her dazzling embellished skirt and punkish jewels (but one turn of her chin to make it look effortless)

This page: silk-chiffon long skirt embroidered with scales of paillettes and crystal, suspended by a metal chain and worn with a silk-jersey tank top, to order. Crystal earrings, crystal nose ring and leather gloves, to order. All Givenchy Haute Couture by Riccardo Tisci, Paris

