

PHOTOS: CLAUDIO MARINESCO

AMAZING

By  
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Booking a supermodel for an interview and a cover shoot on an evening during Fashion Week was tough enough, but throw in a torrential downpour which transformed Seventh Avenue into *The River Wild* and the stress level in the studio at call-time started rising like the waves outside. "I wonder if she'll show up," the photographer queried. Neither of us had worked with Valerie before--funny how we automatically equate *supermodel* with *unreliable*.

Ten minutes later Valerie strolled in, drained and water-logged, but ever professional. She greeted everyone quietly, situated herself in the makeup chair, and unwound with a cigarette. Hair and makeup worked their magic, revealing the familiar face we have seen in Guess? ads, on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, and in Victoria's Secret catalogs. We would expect a dynamic, grounded individual to emerge from this gorgeous exterior. After last month's cover girl Heidi Klum, and many before her, we should get it through our thick, cynical skulls: *Supermodel* does not mean two-dimensional bubble-head Barbie! Here, from Valerie, more proof that modeling success may indeed stem from a beauty which is more than skin deep.

I've been told that the most beautiful women in the world come from your country, Argentina. Do you think that's true? I don't know if that's true, but it is true that there are a lot of beautiful people. There is such a mix of races--Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German--which means we don't have a special look, but that mix is what makes beautiful people. What is your background? Portuguese, German, and Italian. How did you get started modeling? I did my first fashion show when I was 13. I was living in a small town, and my friend's mother organized



Lace  
dress by  
Fifi Cachul  
at Calypso.

the show. I kept doing fashion shows, and for me it was like a game. Then, when I was 16, I met a famous hairdresser from Buenos Aires--big city! He organized big fashion shows, shows with a hundred girls, and he asked me to come do a show. When I finished school, at age 17, I moved to Buenos Aires to give modeling a try and to start university. After a year there, I met someone from New York who wanted me to come there, and then I started traveling: New York, then Europe, then Tokyo. But for the first year I was still studying, so I traveled for three months and then I went back to university for nine months. I realized that if I wanted an international career I would have to travel more, so I moved to New York. But I always went back to Argentina often, and I still do. Every two months I go. **What was your big break?** Guess? was my first international contract, so it was very good. **How old were you?** Umm, it was four or five years ago. **(Wondering if she would flinch) How old are you now?** (No flinch) I'm 26. I used to lie a lot about my age, but now I say I'm 26. I don't care. But it is hard to remember how old I was for certain jobs. **I know the feeling; I've been 22 or 23 for a long time!** **What were some of your other career-building bookings?** The Versace show. The St. Remo Festival in Italy, which is a huge televised song festival. The *Sports Illustrated* cover. Every cover you get is also very important. **Which was your favorite, or most exciting, job?** Umm, I remember I was really excited to do Guess? and the *Sports Illustrated* cover, and the shows are always great, especially in the beginning. It was so exciting to go for the first time to do a Versace or Armani or Valentino show. You wear all these beautiful clothes, you're in the middle of big models and big personalities--you feel part of that huge thing that you always dreamed about. **Are you doing the shows now?** Yes, but just the ones that I like, where I feel good--not too many. I used to, but not anymore! **The buzz is that the drug scene backstage is really bad right now. Do you think so? Do you see it?** Yeah, yeah, you see it. You see it all the time. You'd have to be blind not to, but I really enjoy my job and try to ignore it and do my own thing. I just try to have fun, and I never have any problems with anyone. If someone says something to me that I don't like, I just laugh and keep going. I don't care. I think I'm unique in that way. I will never fight with anyone, never--especially not backstage. **Do you like the business?** Well, I think it's like any business. There are things that I like and things that I don't like. I like my job because I do my job and then I go home and spend time with the people I like. Most of my friends are not in the business. I think the business can be very dangerous because at the end, it's nothing. It's only look good, be happy, and that's it. You need to go home and talk about other things and have other things that are important to you. **I hear you have a big wedding coming up. Who's your fiance?** Yes, I'm getting married in one month...and I'm here! I'm with Alejandro, my fiancé for seven years. We decided a long time ago, but it was never the right time. **Is he someone from home?** Yes, he's from Argentina. He's a business man. He has a production company, and he also works in construction--many things. **It's not easy to make a relationship work, being in this business and being apart so much. How have you two made it work?** At the beginning when I started traveling and we would be apart for two months, it was very hard. But he always helped me and supported me. He never held me back. He's ten years older than me, so he knew that it was important for me to do it. All these years I think we did it together. This was very important for me because this job is always changing; you're traveling all the time, you work for a week and then not for two weeks. You never know what's going to happen with work, so you need someone to keep you grounded. Now we don't stay separated for more than 15 days. **You're getting married in Argentina?** Yes. **How many people are coming to the wedding?** About 1,000 (!). **That's quite a party!** **What are your plans for the future? Children?** I'm going to keep working--well, after two weeks on an island in the middle of nowhere. **With no cell phones (a symphony of cell phones has been playing among the bags in the makeup room).** Right! Me and my (pause as her face lights up the entire studio) future husband are working on different projects. I just did my fragrance, Valeria. We have also a TV show in Argentina which Alejandro is producing and I'm doing some special things for it. I started doing different projects two years ago, when I did my book. There's a moment when you have to start thinking about doing other things. After a while, when you're doing a lot of shows and a lot of pictures, it's all the same. And kids are going to come. I would love to have a lot of kids. I like kids. I want them as soon as possible! **You just did a commercial with Antonio Banderas. How did that go?** We did a commercial together a year and half ago, and this was the second part. He's very, very nice. Very professional. Very much a gentleman. He's Latin, and we speak the same language, so it's very easy to work together. **Does your husband get jealous?** No, no. Melanie was there for the first commercial, and Melanie and Alejandro were both there this time. They are invited to the wedding. **Just one more question. What's your advice for aspiring models?** Be yourself. Listen to all the advice from people who know about the business, but also listen to the people who care about you --your family, your friends--because they are always going to tell you the truth. Don't do anything which makes you uncomfortable. And enjoy! **Anything you want to add?** Just one other thing that I'm doing. I'm working with the Special Olympics. I started with them in Argentina and now I'm working with them all over. I try to talk about it whenever I can, and I go to the events and spend time with the kids.

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Every project I do, I give part of the money to the Special Olympics. When I studied in Argentina, I was studying to work with handicapped people and people with mental problems. That is what I want to do, and in the future I plan to dedicate more time to that. It is something very, very nice. **It's so refreshing to talk to a model who realizes what's really important and makes an effort to give back.** I think everyone can do something. I feel like I'm lucky, and I have the opportunity to do many things. For this project, it's not just that I spend my time, I give them money too, which is important for them. **Best wishes from Tear Sheet for a beautiful wedding day and blissful marriage!**



Sweater by  
Anvers, skirt  
by Paul &  
Joe. Both at  
Calypso.  
Earrings by  
Fragments.