



Hedren on the set of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* – the film, released in 1963, that made her famous. Below: with Dakota Johnson

Gucci belt, the *Fifty Shades of Grey* star, 27, hands over the gifts she has brought: a Marc Jacobs handbag and sunglasses. “These are great! I left my other pair at your mother’s,” Hedren says, trying on the shades – and flashing, as she does so, her long, gold-lacquered nails. Formerly (and famously) a Hitchcock blonde, today her hair is grey and cropped.

Hedren’s housecat, Johnny Depp, prowls the kitchen. He’s not allowed outside, in case he should wander into one of the big-cat enclosures, the closest of which is about 10ft beyond the dining room window and home to a 13-year-old tigress called Mona, who is nowhere to be seen as Hedren and Johnson sit down for lunch. “I have no sense of taste or smell any more, so I don’t care about food,” says Tippi. “I had two falls and hit my head in the same place, which affected my olfactory nerves. It was over 10 years ago.” “But you do love chocolate...” says her granddaughter. “Yes, but that’s because I loved chocolate before. It’s dangerous having no smell though, because I can’t smell smoke. I’ve had all the gas appliances taken out of the house!”

It was with Noel Marshall, the second of her three husbands, that Hedren spent most of the Seventies making the film *Roar*. Their shared passion project – often referred to as

“the most dangerous movie ever made” – *Roar* featured 150 untrained wild animals.

Some 70 members of the cast and crew, including Griffith and Hedren, were injured during production, which ultimately led to the creation of the Shambala Preserve.

The house itself was originally a mobile home, to which Hedren has added several extensions over the decades. “They brought it in on wheels,” she says. “I’ll never forget the day it came down the hill.” Inside, the walls are filled with photos of her family and of Shambala’s big cats, while the shelves are lined with books that reflect her multiple careers: books on fashion, on movies, on Africa and its wildlife. Now, Hedren >

Golden YEARS

TIPPI HEDREN, ONE OF HITCHCOCK’S MOST CELEBRATED BLONDES, TALKS TO HER GRANDDAUGHTER DAKOTA JOHNSON ABOUT LEADING MEN, LIONS AND HER NEW MEMOIR

dakota Johnson seems to be in a mild state of shock as she approaches her grandmother Tippi Hedren’s home on the Shambala Preserve – the sanctuary for lions and other big cats that Hedren founded in the Seventies in the wilderness north of Los Angeles, *writes Tim Walker*. It’s the first time Johnson has visited since a wildfire swept right up to the property in the summer, leaving rows of charred tree trunks just yards from the animal enclosures.

“This is so weird for me,” she says, staring at the apocalyptic scene from

behind the wheel of her Audi SUV. Still, the cats and Hedren’s house remain unscathed, and the 86-year-old welcomes her granddaughter looking as poised and elegant as ever in a black, sleeveless, spot-print blouse with a simple diamond necklace given to her by her daughter, Johnson’s mother, Melanie Griffith – the missing link in this three-generation acting dynasty.

Johnson greets Hedren affectionately as *Mormor*, the Swedish word for granny. Dressed down in a crisp white T-shirt, her blue jeans cinched with a



VOGUEmemoir

has collected her memories in her own book, *Tippi*, a candid memoir that looks all the way back to her midwestern childhood and her modelling career in Fifties New York.

DAKOTA JOHNSON: *Mormor*, how did you start modelling?

TIPPI HEDREN: I was walking down the street in Minneapolis when I was 18, and a woman stopped me, handed me a business card and said: "Would you give this to your mother and have her bring you down to Donaldson's department store? We'd like to have you model in our Saturday morning fashion shows." I thought, what fun!

DJ: They had shows every week?

TH: Yes. We lived in a suburb called Morningside, and every Saturday morning I'd go into the city. The clothes were very Forties: plaid skirts with cashmere sweaters, bobby socks and loafers. It was cute.

DJ: What are you wearing today?

TH: My top is not from a prominent designer but it's cool. Your mother gave me the diamond necklace. The pearl earrings I have had forever. I rarely lose anything, so if they don't break I keep them. My style is sort of elegant and simple. Nothing gaudy, nothing over the top.



Above: Tippi with husband Noel Marshall and daughter Melanie Griffith in 1966.

Below: at home with Neil the lion in 1971



DJ: Had you been to New York before you moved there?

TH: I worked in Minneapolis for a long time, but New York was always saying, "Yoo-hoo!" New York was the place to be if you were going to be a model. Eileen Ford of Ford Models had told me to send her my photographs, which I did, and then she called me to say, "Come to New York." I had just enough money to get there, sitting up on the train for three days! And then enough to keep me for a week at the Barbizon Hotel for Women.

DJ: It sounds like *The Bell Jar*! How did it feel to arrive in Manhattan for the first time?

TH: I'd been living in Minneapolis, so I wasn't afraid of being in a city. But then, I don't know if I've ever been afraid of anything, really. New York models were chic, business-like, career-minded. And I'm not very tall. But New York was fun and exciting, I was learning a lot about clothes and absorbing everything I could. I don't know how many magazine covers I shot, especially with *Seventeen*. I still have a whole trunk full of them.

DJ: Were you always keen on fashion? What were your dreams growing up?

TH: I wanted to be a figure skater – there are 10,000 lakes in Minnesota – but my parents didn't have enough money to send me to classes. I used to watch my friends' lessons, then I'd go out to one of the little lakes in our neighbourhood, and practise and practise.

DJ: Was your mum supportive of you modelling?

TH: Yes. We were Lutherans, and our parents brought me and my sister up with strong morals, and felt I knew how to handle any "situation" that came along – and I did. I handled a lot. The first thing I did when I arrived in New York was find a Lutheran church close to my living quarters. In Los Angeles, I taught Sunday school.



The actress with Charlie Chaplin, who directed her in 1967's *A Countess from Hong Kong*

I got this call: "Hi, Mum! It's Melanie. I'm with Don. Guess what? We just got married!" I cried: "Oh no!"

DJ: How did you meet Pop-Pop [Dakota's grandfather, Peter Griffith] in New York?

TH: I was asked to do a small role on TV, and Peter was one of the actors.

DJ: You can't get away from actors in our family. They're everywhere.

TH: They're still coming out of the woodwork. We were working on a set with a stage and I fell off it and hurt my shin, and Peter came to my rescue, which is how that whole thing started.

DJ: What was it like when you found out you were pregnant?

TH: I was thrilled. We came to California and went down to Mexico and got married secretly a year and a half after we met.

DJ: That's not dissimilar to how my mum and dad [actor Don Johnson] got married the first time. Maybe I should continue the tradition and get secretly hitched to a semi-suitable male? If it doesn't work out the first time, I'll just do it again with somebody else!

TH: Peter and I had another wedding in a beautiful Lutheran church on Long Island. The pictures are too cute for words: it looks like two children getting married. He was 19, I was 22.

DJ: And Mum was married at 18. I'd better get to work! How old was Mum when you married Noel [Marshall, Hedren's second husband]?

TH: She was still a little girl.

DJ: She still is a little girl.

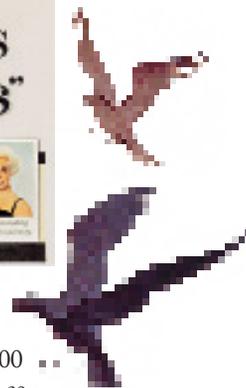
TH: She'll always be my little girl. But she grew up to be a powerful and magnificent woman.

DJ: Mum was 14 and Dad was 22 when they met and fell in love, and that was the end of that. You were not very happy were you, *Mormor*?

TH: No! Here's this slick young actor, charming and handsome as you could find – he had it all. And my little girl involved with that? That was asking way too much. She is very wilful, though. She eloped, too... >

VOGUEmemoir

Below: Tippi with Alfred Hitchcock during the filming of *Marnie* (1964).
Right: a poster for *The Birds*



slammed it! He kept me under contract for two years, paying me \$600 a week. He was miserly as well as a mean bastard.

DJ: Everything is so public now. There's not a lot of space for people to be sneaky or immoral.

TH: He was a master at it. It got to a point where he wanted to make me jealous, so he hired another model and put her under contract. When I asked

who it was, he said "Claire Griswold." I said "Claire? She's a good friend of mine! We worked together in New York! I can't wait to see her!" He was deflated because I didn't turn green with envy. And then all of a sudden she was gone because he told her she could not have any children while she was under contract to him.

DJ: But you went to his funeral?

TH: I did, because I knew both sides of the man: what he had done, and who he was in the motion picture industry will be known forever.

DJ: What was it like working with costumier Edith Head?

TH: Working with Edith was such a wonderful time for me. What I learnt from her more than anything was how brilliantly she manipulated her producers and directors into loving what she designed. She got them thinking her ideas were theirs. I did get tired of that green suit I wore in *The Birds*: I had six of them! But in *Marnie*, the white gown that I wore when I got busted stealing was my favourite. I felt like I was 6ft tall wearing it.

DJ: What did it feel like when you became successful? Were you recognised on the street?

TH: On occasion there would be people running down the street after me. I guess the fact that I had an elegant image meant everybody treated me as such, which was nice. I did learn never

DJ: To Vegas.

TH: I remember exactly where I was when I found out. We had a phone on the wall by the staircase at our house and I got this call: "Hi, Mum! It's Melanie. I'm with Don. Guess what? We just got married!" I cried: "Oh no!"

DJ: We're all so stubborn. How old were you when you stopped modelling?

TH: Thirty-one. I had modelled for a lot longer than most models do. I was getting older, so I started doing television commercials. I received a call on Friday 13 October 1961, from a man asking if I was the girl in the Sego TV commercial. I said, "Yes, why?" He said that somebody was interested in me, but they couldn't tell me who. Finally, they admitted Alfred Hitchcock wanted to sign me to a contract. Being under contract to Hitchcock was very exciting. But the longer it went on, the more control he wanted. And we aren't that kind of people – we don't control well.

DJ: Nuh-uh. Not in this family. How drastically and how quickly did the relationship change?

TH: It was a long period of time, which allowed me to do *The Birds* and *Marnie*. But when Hitchcock's demands became unbearable, I said I wanted to get out of my contract. His last words to me were: "I'll ruin your career." I said: "Do what you have to do," and slammed the door on him. And I really

to go out without my mascara on.

DJ: You taught me how to put mascara on. I think I got my long eyelashes from you.

TH: I think it's fabulous that you and Melanie are actors. I didn't suggest it to her; she just came home one day and said: "Mum, I'm going to be in a movie!"

DJ: I grew up on sets. I thought, "This is their job; this is what my job will be." Did you ever fall in love with any of your co-stars?

TH: No.

DJ: Not even a little bit?

TH: Maybe with Sean [Connery], a little bit. But I said to myself: "Tippi, don't get involved." And I didn't. He was a great gentleman. And he was probably told: "You will not touch the girl." That's what Hitchcock would say. Working with Charlie Chaplin was pretty amazing. I was just free of my contract with Hitchcock when I got the call for *A Countess from Hong Kong*. Charlie directed by acting out all of our different roles. Marlon [Brando] wanted to quit because that was totally against his method acting. For him to have to watch Charlie Chaplin doing his role was insulting. But I loved it: I thought it was wonderful watching Charlie. Marlon and I had a good time. He thought we ought to have an affair, and I said "Well, I don't think that's going to happen." I don't do that with my leading men.

DJ: So, Neil was your first lion?

TH: Yeah. He was owned by Ron Oxley, who was charged with finding the animals for *Roar*. During a *Life* magazine photo shoot for the film, Neil leapt over the banister from the landing and crashed on to the dining table. His front leg landed on my plate and the whole table came down and everything landed on me. The wine glasses... everything! I considered them pets at first, when we first got the little lion cubs – oh God, they were so cute! But boy, you can't take a chance on when those instincts are going to kick in. One of the lions bit me on the head when we were shooting footage for *Roar*.

DJ: *Mormor*, you have done so many things in your life – what do you still want to achieve?

TH: I just wait for what's going to happen in my life. I'm steered in directions that I find to be more and more interesting as the years go by. I'm amazed looking back at what doors were opened for me and the ones I chose to go through. ■

"Tippi: A Memoir", by Tippi Hedren, is published by William Morrow at £20