

THE TRIBUNE

PARADISE

One Woman's Search For Love

**A Profile
Of Audrey Hepburn**

By Edward Klein



Audrey Hepburn is sophisticated, charming, feminine — and vulnerable

AUDREY HEPBURN and I are sitting alone in front of a crackling fireplace in the den of her friend's home in Beverly Hills. She dreads interviews—"This is my very last magazine interview, ever!" she vows—but she has agreed to meet with me over a period of two days to try to unravel a mystery.

This May she will turn 60. She has never had a facelift, she doesn't use a press agent, she lives quietly in a secluded Swiss village and she has turned down hundreds of scripts since her last movie, *They All Laughed*, eight years ago.

Yet this shy and reclusive star seems poised for a comeback. Here she is, suddenly, the glorious face in Revlon's ad for "the most unforgettable women in the world," the glamorous figure who outshines women half her age at the Academy Awards, the Special Ambassador for UNICEF who draws adoring mobs all over the world, the rarest of Hollywood commodities—the "bankable" name who can still guarantee that a movie will get made.

"In the last year, I've had seven requests from publishers for the Audrey Hepburn story," she says. "You know, the *definitive* book."

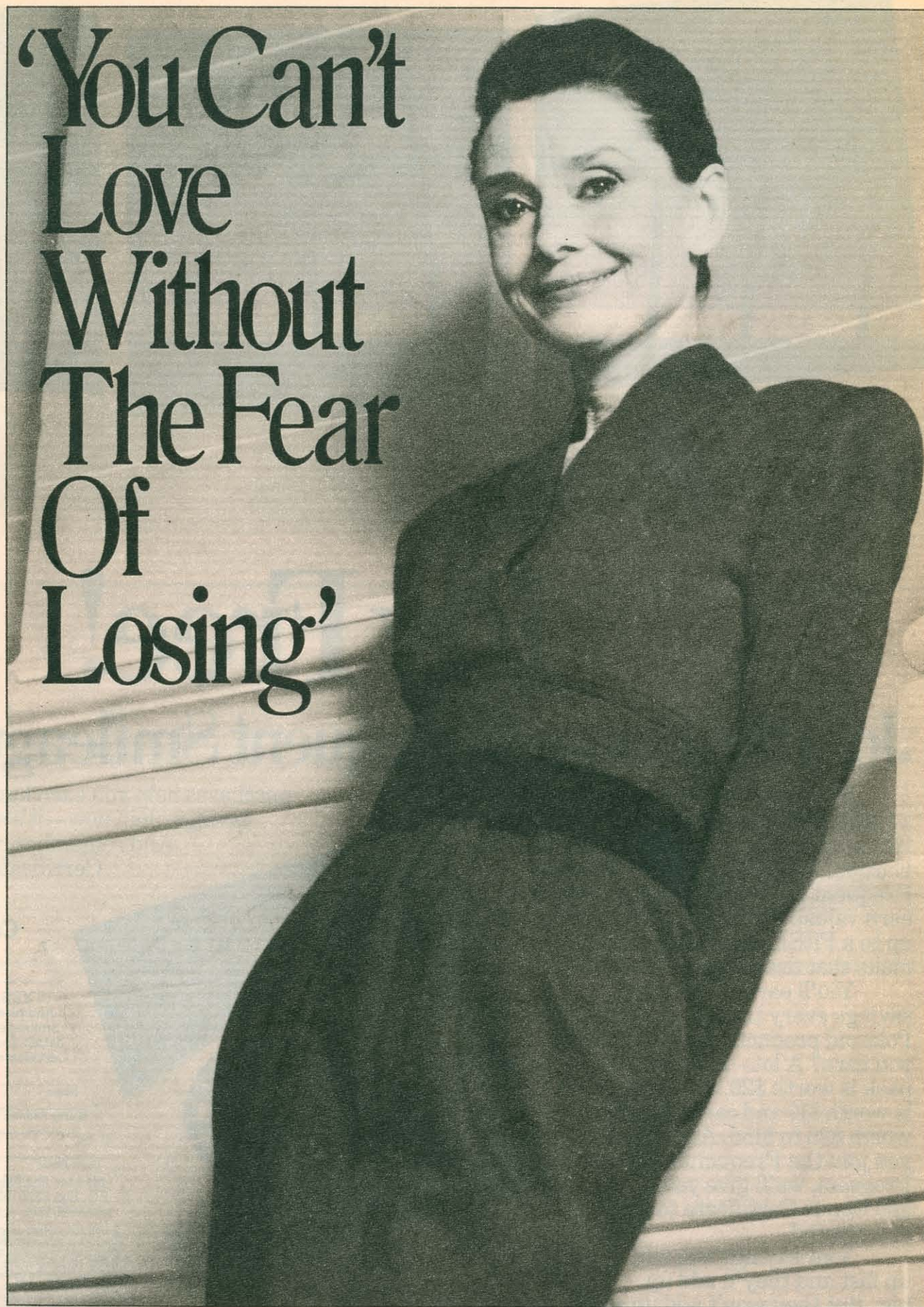
It makes sense. We live in a time when romance is back in vogue, and so is Audrey Hepburn. But why is it that while most other actresses her age have faded into celluloid memory, she still has the power to reach us in our deepest fantasy life? What is the mystery of her enduring appeal?

"I'll never have an answer to what makes me special," she says in that lovely, lilting voice which instantly evokes images of the vulnerable princess in *Roman Holiday* and Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. "The last thing you want to be in acting is an introvert, which I am. I've never loved to perform. Oh, I liked it beforehand—all the preparation—and I liked it afterward, if it went well. But the thing itself is scary!"

She gets up suddenly, almost bolts out of the sofa, as if she's trying to escape a frightening memory. The room is small, but she takes long, balletlike strides that carry her in a nervous circle. Then, just as suddenly, she stops with her back to the fireplace.

Audrey Hepburn is 5 feet 7, still reed-thin at 110 pounds, with perfect posture. She is wearing jeans and a wool pull-over, a touch of mascara accenting her large eyes but no other makeup. And

'You Can't Love Without The Fear Of Losing'



Timothy White

BY EDWARD KLEIN

there's no jewelry around her famous neck, which is like a long, elegant pedestal that keeps your eyes focused on her expressive face.

"I remember," she continues, "many years ago, my mother said to me, 'Considering that you have no talent, it's really extraordinary where you've got.' And that's what I really believe to this day. I've always been self-conscious about interviews, about my thinness, my tallness, my unattractiveness. My success—it still bewilders me."

So here is a start in unraveling the mystery—her lifelong need to overcome a desperate sense of insecurity. But then, many actors are plagued by self-doubt, and this alone doesn't seem enough to explain Hepburn's hold on our hearts.

Remember, at the height of her fame in the '50s and '60s, she rivaled Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Berg-

man and that other Hepburn—Katharine—as one of the greatest female movie stars of all time. By 30, she was commanding \$1 million a movie plus 10 percent of the gross. She made *Sabrina* with Humphrey Bogart and William Holden, *Funny Face* with Fred Astaire, *Love in the Afternoon* with Gary Cooper—and she created her very own look in Givenchy's dresses and gowns.

"It would be fun to do another part before I roll over," she says with a modesty that, coming from her, doesn't sound false. "People are inclined to send scripts to me for which the parts are too young. I'd love to do a picture with Michael Caine or

Michael Douglas—actors who have style but aren't pompous about it."

And you know all she'd have to do is ask. Her kind of career doesn't just happen. For an answer to the Hepburn mystery, she delves further into her past.

"The most traumatic event in my life was when my father left my mother," she says. This was in Brussels, Belgium, where she was born Edda Kathleen Hepburn van Heemstra, the daughter of a domineering Dutch mother and a ne'er-do-well Hungarian-Irish father. It was a stormy marriage that left a lasting mark on the sensitive girl, and even now Audrey Hepburn can't forget the day when she was 6 and her father walked out of the house.

"I remember my mother's reaction," she says. "You look into your mother's

face, and it's covered with tears, and you're terrified. You say to yourself, 'What's going to happen to me?' The ground has gone out from under you."

"I'm not afraid to say that something of that feeling has stayed with me through my own relationships. When I fell in love and married, I lived in constant fear of being left. I was terrified that someone else would take them away from me. I learned that you can't love without the fear of losing."

Her father's disappearance was followed by a series of shattering losses. When Audrey's mother moved the family back to Holland, she discovered that most of her fortune had been frittered away by her husband. Then, when Audrey was a promising 11-year-old ballet student, the Germans invaded the Netherlands. Audrey's half-brother, Ian, was carted off to a concentration camp; an

food—flour, jam, oatmeal, cans of butter. You see, I've had black moments, but when I hit rock-bottom, there's always something there for me."

And so, gradually, the pieces of the puzzle can be identified: a shy, introverted child; a practical, disciplined teenager; a fragile, innocent young woman. Possessing a high degree of intelligence, Audrey Hepburn built a career on these foundations, creating a movie image of such elegant perfection that she became every man's dream. Women loved her too, because under all her immaculate style and playfulness they sensed someone needy, a kind of orphan princess. Through 19 Hollywood movies, she always played a woman searching for something.

But what?

"I never in my wildest dreams ever thought that maybe I'd be a great star,"

she says. "It was a simple need. I had to go to work. I had a mother to take care of. Eventually, I was able to give my mother the life she deserved. I was able to help my father..."

"Your father?" I interrupt. "I thought your father disappeared from your life when you were a child."

Then, slowly and with a great deal of pain, she starts to tell a story—a story I have never heard before: her search for lost love. "I never saw him from the time he left when I was 6," she explains. "I knew he was living in Dublin, but I didn't know how to reach him. At age 30, I had this great need. I found his address through the Red Cross."

I can't resist asking: "But you were a famous movie star by then. Why didn't he make an effort to contact you?"

"It might have happened earlier," she answers, "but maybe he didn't want to see me. His sense of discretion..." She pauses, then adds: "Perhaps I don't want to talk about it."

Now I can see the tears filling her eyes, and she falls silent for a minute or more. I wait until she can resume.

"At some point I wrote my father," she says. "I traveled to Dublin with Mel Ferrer [the actor who was her husband at the time]. My father was living in a tiny apartment, just two rooms, but please don't make it sound as though he was poverty-stricken. He looked the way I remembered him. Older, yes, but much

continued

When an Actress Captures the Heart



Hepburn charmed audiences as a princess in *Roman Holiday* (1953), with Gregory Peck.



As Holly Golightly in 1961's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, she was an elusive waif.



In the 1964 hit *My Fair Lady*, the actress played a feisty, endearing Eliza Doolittle.



Hepburn co-starred with Sean Connery in 1976's nostalgic *Robin and Marian*.



Last year, Audrey Hepburn became the Special Ambassador for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), helping the organization—which consists of private, nonprofit committees in affluent countries—raise money for the world's neediest children. The money is used to provide medical services, clean water and food to millions of children in 119 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. (In this photograph, the actress spends time with a group of children in Venezuela, as part of a South American tour in 1988.) For more information, write: U.S. Committee for UNICEF, Dept. P, 331 E. 38th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

uncle who was active in the resistance was executed by a Nazi firing squad.

"But," she says, "I've always been almost eerily fortunate. I was given an outlook on life by my mother, a lady of very strict Victorian standards. It was frowned upon to bother others with your feelings. It was frowned upon not to think of others first. It was frowned upon not to be disciplined."

"Then, since I was a child, I've believed in prayer. Please don't make this sound pompous, but I have this faith that things somehow work out. During the last winter of the war, we had no food whatsoever, and my aunt said to me, 'Tomorrow we'll have nothing to eat, so the best thing to do is stay in bed and conserve our energy.' That very night, a member of the underground brought us

HEPBURN /continued

the same. Slim and tall. He was married to a woman some 30-odd years his junior, almost my age."

And what, I ask, did they talk about after a separation of 24 years?

"I had just made a movie called *The Unforgiven* with Burt Lancaster, and I fell off a horse during the shooting. My father was a great horseman in his youth, and he said to me, 'Of course you were a fool to ride that gray stallion.' He was cross with me for riding a horse that was going to throw me."

She took care of her father's every need for the next two decades, until the time he died in his 90s. "It helped me to lay the ghost," she says. "I went on suffering as long as I didn't see him."

But, apparently, her aloof father could never truly reciprocate her love, and the ghost she thought had been put to rest continued to haunt her. The 14-year marriage to Mel Ferrer, who had dominated her personal and professional life, broke up in 1968. On the rebound, she married a handsome Italian psychiatrist named Andrea Dotti, another domineering man, whose compulsive womanizing was a public embarrassment until they too were divorced.

But in 1980 she met Robert Wolders. He is a Dutch actor who once was married to the late movie star Merle Oberon and who is eight years younger than Audrey Hepburn. They have never married, but when she introduces Wolders to me, it is obvious from the ease and warmth with which they treat each other that they are very much in love.

So now, an answer to the mystery of Audrey Hepburn. All her life, she has been searching for a man capable of returning her love. And I believe she has found that man in the gentle, decent, psychological father figure of Wolders.

Today, her two children (one by each previous marriage) are grown up, and Audrey Hepburn and Robert Wolders live in a 16th-century farmhouse near Lausanne, Switzerland. He presides over her schedule, makes sure she gets nine to 10 hours of sleep every day and accompanies her wherever she goes, including two recent trips to Ethiopia and Latin America on behalf of UNICEF.

"Robby has no ego, that's for sure," she says. "We love to live the same way—the country life. He's as bananas about our four dogs as I am. We're both Dutch, and that's a big bond. It took me a long time to find someone like him, but sometimes it *is* better late than never. If I'd met him when I was 18, I wouldn't have appreciated him. I would have thought, 'That's the way everyone is.'"

"I still feel I could lose everything at any moment. But the greatest victory has been to be able to live with myself, to accept my shortcomings and those of others. I'm a long way from the human being I'd like to be. But I've decided I'm not so bad after all." 12