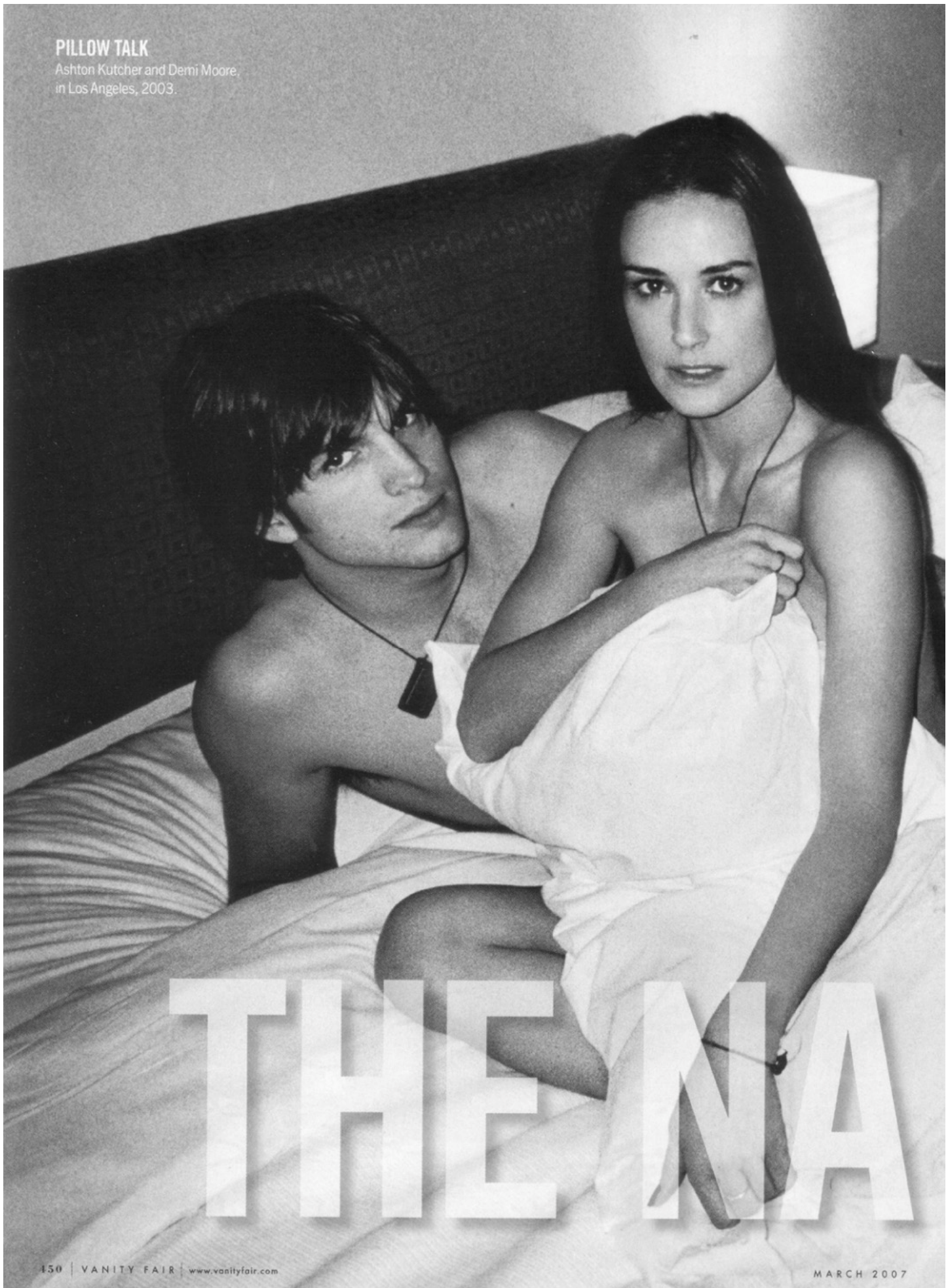


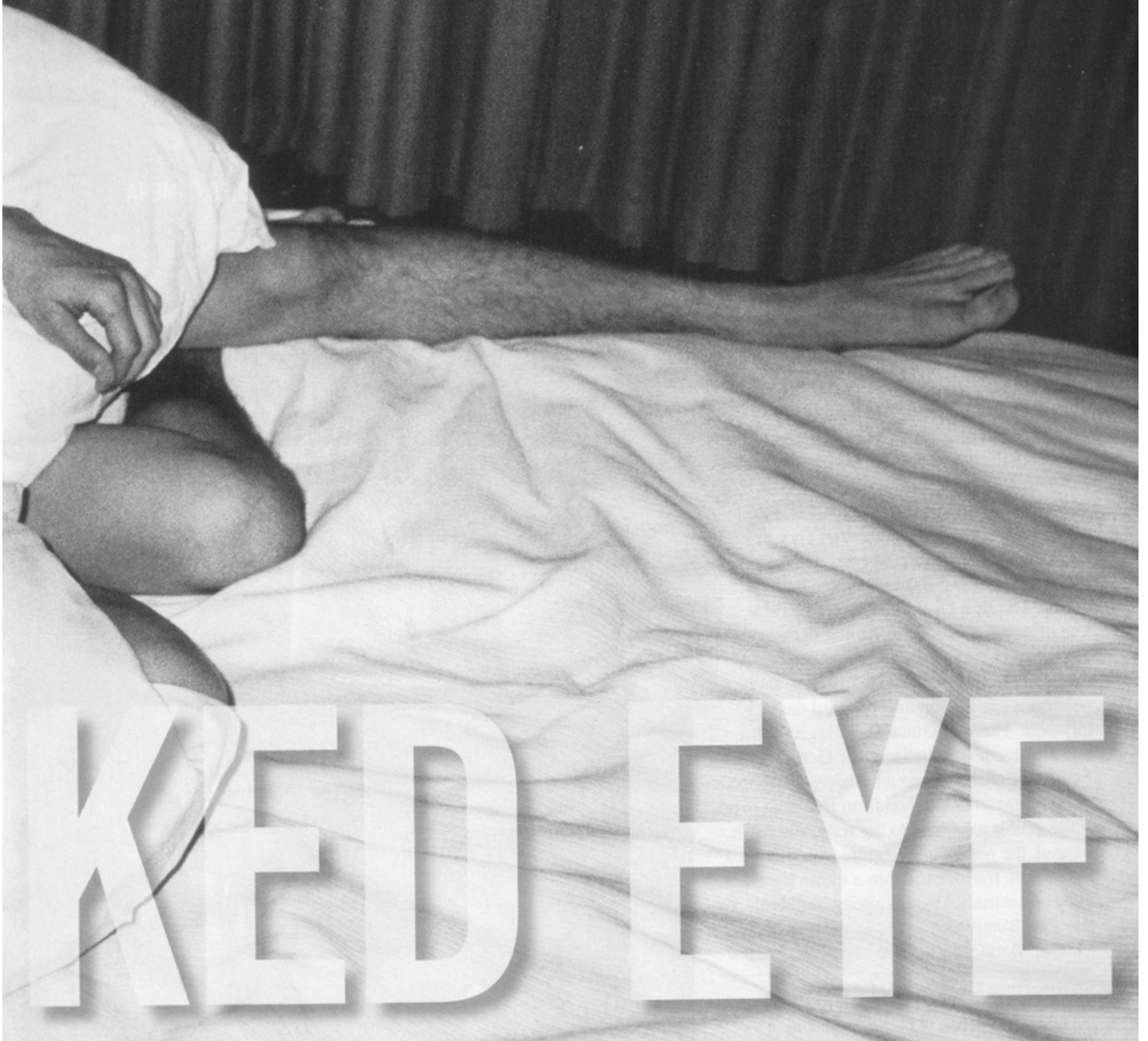
PILLOW TALK

Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore,  
in Los Angeles, 2003.



# THE MA

As beautiful as they are revealing, MARIO TESTINO's photographs have made him welcome in a zone of privacy—the intimate, undefended spaces of everyone from Demi to Madonna to Gwyneth—that few others can enter. With a selection of images from Testino's new book, *Let Me In!*, MICHAEL ROBERTS explains why, in the presence of that skillful camera, Hollywood stars can't help but let themselves go



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Mario Testino reclines on a gilded chaise longue in a corner of his cathedral-size white marble studio. Toying distractedly with the sparkling diamond-studded platinum Leica dangling from his wrist, he listens to a soothing soundtrack of violins and harps as legions of lissome assistants diligently heave wind machines and digital hardware to and fro across the vast acres of Aubusson. "Increeedible," sighs Mario. Inspired by the sunlight flooding down onto their cherubic curls from the cantilevered skylight, he waves away the liveried footmen holding a gold carved sedan chair ready to whisk him off to the latest location, as he has decided to stay. Suddenly the doors burst open and a Very Grand Star sweeps in, her face a mask of grief. "Oh, Mario, Mario," she sobs, "you haven't photographed me for hours, days, weeks!" Prostrating herself in a pitiful heap of chiffon and sable on the floor, she weeps softly into the honey-beige carpeting as the music swells to a crescendo.

Without a word Mario puts the Leica to his eye and snaps. Faster and faster. Then he raises another glittering gem-encrusted camera to his other eye and snaps them both in unison. The air is filled with a thousand twinkling flashes, each one affirming the star's placement in the galaxy of stellar entities.

"Mmmm. Increeedible, no?," Mario says, pointing a languid forefinger toward the digital screen. The Very Grand Star staggers to her feet and recoils in amazement. Gone are the careworn features of her high anxiety. Gone, too, are the worry lines etched from troubling over which profile to present to her voracious public. Instead, the weebegone creature who staggered in has been transformed into a movie legend, a thing of Lustrous Allure, Vivacity, and Remarkably Few Blemishes.

"Oh, Mario, Mario," she says, "you are just

Excerpted from *Let Me In!*, by Mario Testino. A signed, limited edition of 1,000 copies to be published this month by Taschen; © 2007 by the author.



**CANDIED CAMERA**

- (1) Gisele Bündchen, Los Angeles, 2006. (2) Scarlett Johansson, L.A., 2004.
- (3) Cameron Diaz, L.A., 2002.
- (4) Iman and David Bowie, New York City, 2002.
- (5) Hugh Hefner and his Bunnies at the *Vanity Fair* Oscar party, L.A., 2000.
- (6) Linda Evangelista and Amber Valletta, N.Y.C., 2004.
- (7) Claudia Schiffer, London, 2003.
- (8) Hayden Christensen, Capri, 2003.



so... "Increeedible, no?" cries Mario, leaping onto his prancing white stallion, gathering himself into his shaved-mink cape, and, with a cavalier wave of his light meter as rose petals fall, galloping off into the brightest of bright-pink sunsets. CUT!

That was a scene from the musical *Too Too Mario*, an epic from Farfetched Productions destined for an imaginary cinema near you (provided you live in an area with suitable style credentials), in which we discover over several lush hours why Mario Testino is just so very Mario. We are treated to soaring duets ("I love you!" "I love you, too!") warbled by Mario and Demi Moore, showstopping harmonies ("You make me look so interesting!" "I know!") trilled by Mario, Gwyneth, Madonna, and many others. We have a tender aria ("Where's my helicopter?") crooned by Mario with one eye on his BlackBerry and the other on his luggage, and everything ends with a rousing chorus ("My heart says take my clothes off, but my publicist says I shouldn't") sung by the entire membership of the Hollywood Actors Guild. All of which goes to prove that when the stars want to be in pictures nowadays they don't call the studios. They call Mario.



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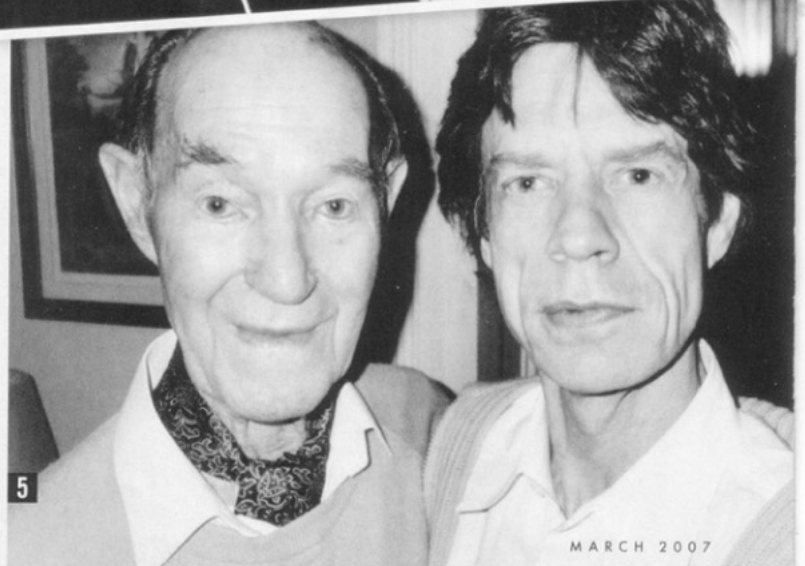
I first called Mario many years ago, when he was not celebrated solely by his first name. It was the early 80s, and I seem to remember him living in a London squat, a grand squat (something like an abandoned hospital) but a squat nonetheless. He was the budding photographer.

I was the peripatetic fashion editor of the English social monthly *Tatler*. His first glossy-magazine shoot was not spectacular—just a model wearing some Ralph Lauren leaning against a gruesome crumbling wall in a Soho tenement. It was cold, squalid, and damp, a far cry from the gold-plated, private-jetted, tropically heated Marioworld of today. In the years since then we have run into each other in Tangier, London, Rio, Milan, Paris, and New York as the trajectory of his fashion career blazed a trail that inevitably led to innermost Hollywood and the singularly revealing pictures in this book. What makes them unique? "It's the intimacy," says Mario. "The feeling of total privacy." Thus we have the entire spectrum of Hollywood royalty larking about in their undies (or less) as candidly unembarrassed as alcohol-fueled students at a slumber party. "There's a certain amount of trust because I'm not going to make them look bad," says Mario. "Some of them may say, 'Oh, stop taking pictures,' but I think it's an obligation. I'm allowed to see things that most people are not—so I should show them."

All of which reminds me of the opening scene from *Too Too Mario*. The mega-budget credits sweep us through winter in Gstaad, spring in Paris, and summer in Peru, and finally we alight on autumn in New York. Central Park. Mario is snapping Demi Moore. Her clothes drop like autumn leaves as she hides behind her super-luxurious leather handbag. "Pleeese, Demi," Mario coaxes. "Just a leetle more skin. Really, it would be increeedible." "Oh, Mario," sighs Demi, thwacking him about the head with her priceless iguana-skin Birkin. "You are awful—but I like you!" □



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