

# BAD GIRLS of FASHION

STYLE  
REBELS  
FROM CLEOPATRA  
TO LADY GAGA

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JENNIFER  
CROLL  
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illustrated  
by ADA  
BUCHHOLZ



annick press  
toronto + berkeley + vancouver

# For my mother, Judy, and my Nana Margaret and Nana Lynn, the original bad girls in my life—J.C.

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# Contents

*Introduction* 2

1

**CLEOPATRA *Fashion Leader* 4**

Empress Dowager Cixi 12 / Elizabeth I 13 / Angela Davis 23

2

**MARIE ANTOINETTE *Fashion Decadent* 26**

Imelda Marcos 36 / Rose Bertin 37 / Wallis Simpson 43

3

**COCO CHANEL *Fashion Modernizer* 46**

Josephine Baker 51 / Amelia Bloomer 57 / Louise Brooks 63

4

**FRIDA KAHLO *Fashion Artist* 66**

Miuccia Prada 75 / M.I.A. 82 / Elsa Schiaparelli 83

5

**MARLENE DIETRICH *Fashion Gender-Bender* 86**

George Sand 93 / Diane Keaton 100 / Twiggy 101

6

**DIANA VREELAND *Fashion Instigator* 104**

Anna Wintour 113 / Grace Coddington 118 / Tavi Gevinson 119

7

**MADONNA *Fashion Chameleon* 122**

Grace Jones 127 / Marilyn Monroe 131 / Rihanna 139

8

**REI KAWAKUBO *Anti-Fashion* 142**

Cindy Sherman 149 / Yoko Ono 155 / Björk 157

9

**KATHLEEN HANNA *Fashion Radical* 160**

Vivienne Westwood 168 / Beth Ditto 169 / Pussy Riot 175

10

**LADY GAGA *Fashion Freak* 178**

Nicki Minaj 184 / Cher 185 / Isabella Blow and Daphne Guinness 194

*Conclusion* 198

*Selected References* 199

*Image Credits* 203

*Further Reading* 201

*Index* 204

*Acknowledgments* 202

*About the Author and Illustrator* 206

# *Introduction*

**When you get out of bed** in the morning, open your closet, and pick out clothes for the day, what's going through your mind? Maybe you're thinking about how what you wear will help you fit in with the cool crowd, or how a photo of your perfectly color-coordinated ensemble will get a lot of "likes" online. Maybe there's someone you want to impress, or to imitate. Or maybe your deepest thought about your wardrobe is "Do I have a clean shirt today?"

But dressing doesn't always have to be about convenience or fitting in. A pair of heavy boots and a punk T-shirt could make other students think you're tough; an ultra-fashionable dress might cause them to assume you're sophisticated; a flamboyant, brightly colored getup could make them imagine you're creative or free-spirited. Clothes can sometimes have consequences: the "wrong" look could get you kicked out of school, passed over for a job, or branded with a reputation you don't

want. But your clothes can also help you get your way or change people's minds about who you are.

Throughout history, people—especially women—have used fashion to shape the way other people think about them. That's partly because it was one of the only ways they could. In the past, women often faced very severe limitations on the careers they could pursue and the kind of life they could live: sometimes dressing up was the only way they could really express themselves. But some women realized how tactical fashion can be—how powerful a tool it is for shaping opinion and for challenging the status quo. And while a lot of other things have changed—women in many countries today have the freedom to choose their own careers and live their lives the way they decide to—fashion still has the power to transform.

This book is all about the bad girls throughout history who have dressed to shake things up. Whether they used

clothing to gain power, rebel against social norms, or explore their own identity, the forty-three women in this book—queens, actresses, fashion designers, writers, artists, dancers, politicians, academics, socialites, models, musicians, and activists—used fashion to help them change opinions, confront opposition, and make other people look at them in a different light. Across different eras and social settings, they were willing to take risks in order to get what they wanted; they dressed in ways that weren't socially acceptable, that could have cost them their careers, relationships, or reputations. Sometimes, they didn't just change their own lives: they changed the world around them. And as you read about the daring (and sometimes dangerous) clothing worn by women as diverse as the powerful ancient Egyptian queen Cleopatra, the cross-dressing movie star Marlene Dietrich, and the ultra-artistic contemporary pop star Lady Gaga, you'll realize that fashion is anything but frivolous.



PAGE  
12



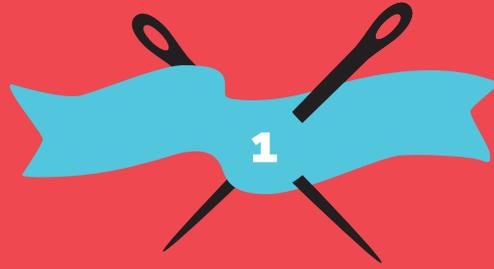
PAGE  
81



PAGE  
101



PAGE  
188



*Cleopatra*  
**FASHION**  
*Leader*

**FULL NAME:**

**Cleopatra VII Philopator**

**BORN:**

**69 BCE, Alexandria, Egypt**

**OCCUPATION:**

**Pharaoh of Egypt**

**BAD GIRL CRED:**

**Cleopatra knew image was power—  
and over two thousand years later,  
her image still holds our fascination.**



*In the dead of night in 48 BCE, a figure sneaks across the ancient Egyptian city of Alexandria. A long, rolled-up bundle hangs heavily from his arms: a carpet. When he reaches the royal palace, he ducks into a side entrance and down a hallway; when he spots a guard, dressed in Roman armor, he speaks briefly to him in Latin. "An offering," he says, hefting the carpet. The guard steps aside, letting him pass.*

*He walks across a threshold into a large room, and stops cold when he recognizes the person inside. Standing before him is the most powerful man alive: Julius Caesar, the Roman dictator.*

*Gingerly, the man lowers himself to one knee, places the carpet in front of Caesar, and begins to unroll it. Then something happens that makes Caesar gasp: a young woman tumbles out of the carpet, tosses back her hair, and rises to her feet. She wears a gauzy, almost see-through robe and a purposeful expression. And—most startling—on her head is a diadem, the headband-like crown that only an Egyptian queen can wear. She is Cleopatra VII, the Egyptian ruler—a powerful, intelligent woman whose influence will be felt in fashion for the next two thousand years.*

Most people have an idea of what Cleopatra looked like. You might have dressed up as her for Halloween one year: all it would take is a black wig with bangs, black eyeliner, a long dress, and a snake bracelet. She's a force in high fashion, too: many a model has strutted the catwalk dressed as Egypt's most famous queen. But Cleopatra was so much more than what she wore.



# WALK LIKE AN *Egyptian*

**Almost from birth,** Cleopatra knew her image was powerful. She grew up in the Egyptian capital of Alexandria, one of five children of the pharaoh Ptolemy XII Auletes. Since Egyptian people associated their royal family with gods, they called young Cleopatra *Thea*, meaning “goddess.” She took the message to heart.

Growing up, Cleopatra was never a great beauty, but it didn’t matter: she got everywhere with her brains and personality. She threw herself wholeheartedly into learning. Her father was a sponsor of both the Museum of Alexandria and the famous Library of Alexandria, so Cleopatra took advantage of their resources.

She immersed herself in philosophy and history and wrote books on medicine, her favorite topic. She learned nine languages, including Egyptian: she was the first in her family to learn the local tongue.

Cleopatra's family was actually from Macedonia, a small country beside Greece that built a huge empire under the king Alexander the Great.



## EGYPT AND ROME

During Cleopatra's time, Egypt was a "client kingdom" of Rome, which meant that Egyptian rulers had to report to Roman leadership. Egypt operated independently, but only with the permission of Roman rulers, who could snatch that independence away at any moment.

Her ancestor Ptolemy I was one of Alexander the Great's generals, and when Alexander died and his empire was broken into pieces, Ptolemy was given Egypt. His family had ruled it ever since.

By age sixteen, Cleopatra was pharaoh. At first, she co-ruled with her father. Her family was complicated, to say the least: the Ptolemies didn't mind incest in the slightest, and married each other to keep power within the family. In fact, Cleopatra's father's only official wife, who had died years earlier, was both his cousin and his niece (nobody knows for sure who Cleopatra's mother was). Rising to the throne, Cleopatra was given the title *Thea Philopator*: "father-loving goddess." When her father died less than a year later, in March, the quick-witted teenager knew she couldn't take her power for granted. She'd inevitably be married to one of her brothers, as was the family tradition—and she didn't intend to share command. So she continued to sign documents in her father's name and pretended nothing had changed. After four months of planning, on the thirtieth of June, 51 BCE, she let the Senate know about her father's death—and then launched a grand tour of Egyptian temples to get the rural population on her side.

When she dressed every day, Cleopatra mixed Greek (or Macedonian) and Roman styles to please her subjects while paying homage to her roots. After all, she was a Macedonian woman who ruled over a country that was, technically, part of the Roman empire. She wore belted tunics and mantles (a type of cloak) that fell to the ankle in vibrant shades of blue, green, and red, with woven sandals on her feet. But on *this* trip, Cleopatra dressed more tactically. She wore a red and white crown to symbolize a united Egypt (white represented Upper Egypt; red, Lower Egypt). Cleopatra also knew how important gods were to the Egyptian people, and realized she would have an easier time leading if people saw her as a kind of goddess. So she styled herself as the *Nea* (“new”) *Isis*.

As *Nea Isis*, Cleopatra wore a white linen sheath decorated with sequins and beads, and draped over it a black robe with a tasseled fringe. On her head, she wore a crown with ram and cow horns, a sun disc, and feathers of *Isis*. She threw on a wig for public appearances, and the rest of the time pulled her hair back in a braided bun that has been dubbed her “melon hairstyle.” Snake bracelets were another carefully planned touch, since the goddess *Isis* was often portrayed with



**Cleopatra as Nea Isis.**

**Previous page: An important deity within Egyptian mythology, Isis was the goddess of motherhood, nature, and magic.**

a snake. As *Isis*’s lookalike, Cleopatra spoke to her subjects—many of whom were illiterate—visually: she was a divine leader, and worthy of their devotion. One look at her, and they knew more than a thousand written decrees could tell them.

# Girl BOSS



**Julius Caesar: Cleopatra's key to securing power.**

**Though her subjects loved her,**

Cleopatra found herself in a dangerous position in 50 BCE, when her much younger brother Ptolemy XIII was named her coruler. Egged on by his advisers, who weren't fans of Cleopatra, he pushed her out of Alexandria—and so she waited, out in the desert, with troops loyal to her leadership. That's where she was the fateful moment that Julius Caesar, the Roman leader, arrived in Alexandria to collect on a loan to her family and raise money for his next military campaign.

Just how Cleopatra wound up in Caesar's private chambers is something historians argue about. The most popular story (and the one that's usually portrayed in movies) involves her rolling out of a carpet, but other interpretations depict her being carried inside a sack, or simply walking through the city cloaked in a face-shrouding himation.

Whether she was carried or walked there herself, Cleopatra's appearance before Caesar was a daring feat. In that moment, she was dressed to impress: both queenly and seductive. Though he was already married, Caesar was well known for his love affairs with women,



## HIMATION

a fact Cleopatra probably knew and planned to exploit. Whether it was that night or in the following days, she became Caesar's lover, sneakily securing his support of her leadership bid—and, most important, of Egypt's continuing independence, as Caesar could easily have decided to bring Egypt under direct Roman leadership. Caesar and Cleopatra's relationship was politically and personally good for both of them, and it brought Cleopatra her first child, a boy she named after his father: Caesarion.

But things couldn't go smoothly forever, and in 44 BCE, the worst thing that could happen *did* happen. Caesar, recently declared dictator for life, was killed by a group led by a Roman senator, Brutus. He was literally stabbed in the back, which is where this expression, which means "betrayed," comes from. In that moment, Cleopatra lost her most powerful supporter, and, with him, her guarantee of the Egyptian throne. But the wily queen wasn't going to let that get in the way of ruling the country she loved.

A cloak made from fabric wrapped around the body. When Cleopatra was alive, Greek-born women wrapped their himatia tightly around themselves in public, concealing their faces from everyone except their husbands.



# ICONIC LOOK No 1

**EMPERESS DOWAGER CIXI** played a huge role in the fashion of young Chinese women in the nineteenth century. Cixi, nicknamed "Dragon Lady" in the West, had a fierce reputation to match. Born a concubine, she eventually seized the throne. One of the ways Cixi gained favor while in power was being photographed in glamorous attire, but her most important move was abolishing footbinding. Footbinding was a very fashionable practice in China—and a painful one, too—in which a young girl's feet were broken and then tied up tightly to prevent them from growing. Cixi's late-in-life ruling gave other women the freedom to walk freely, as she did.



EMPERESS DOWAGER CIXI