

SCENE

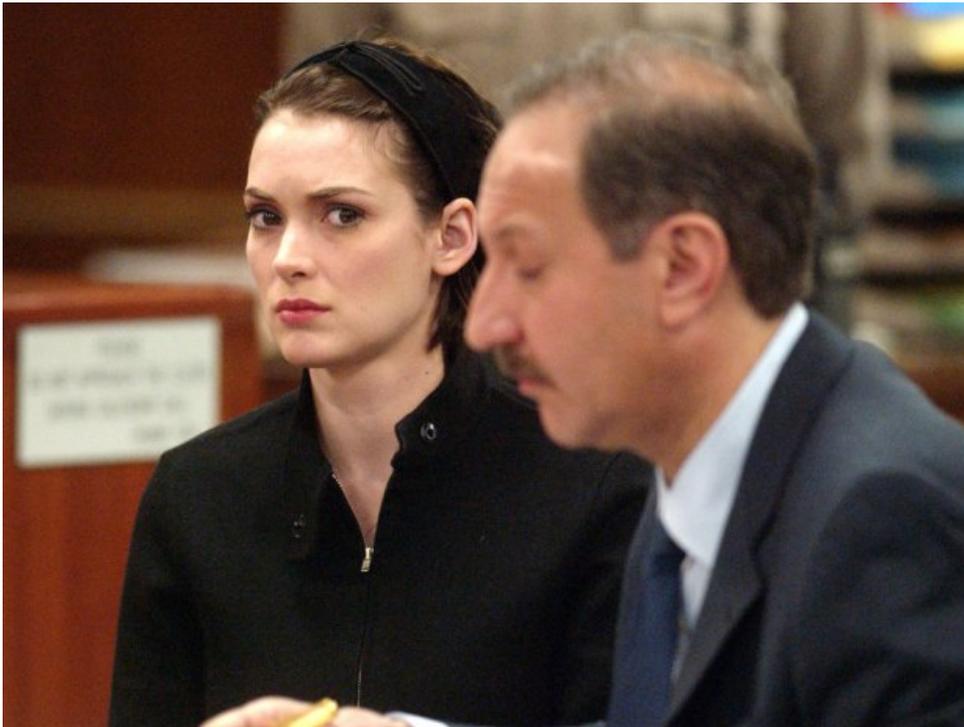
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Shinan: Separating Saks from fiction in the history of a storied department store



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On Dec. 6, 2002, a stylish and somewhat contrite Winona Ryder was sentenced for shoplifting from Saks Fifth Avenue.

Steve Grayson/Getty Images files

On a hazy Friday in July 1999, **Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy** took a jaunt to Saks Fifth Avenue. There was a wedding she was attending the next day, and she was in the market, pronto, for a dress. Knowing what she liked, and having a knack for getting what she wanted, she zeroed in on a short, black number designed by **Alber Elbaz**, then working for **Yves Saint Laurent**.

Mere hours later, the fashion-plate was on board a single-engine plane commandeered by her husband — America's Prince Charming — en route to Hyannis Port. Nobody on that plane survived. Carolyn's dress would never be worn.

The dustbin of history? Sure, but also part of the lore that makes the fashion world go 'round, and what was in part the Saks appeal (there, I said it) for Hudson's Bay this week. We know what Saks got out of the headlines-making mega-deal: [a cash transaction valued at approximately \\$2.9-billion including debt, as per reports](#). But what the Canadian-based company got out of it, besides bricks, besides mortar, besides stock — considering that fashion's never just transactional but dances to the ephemeral notions of desire and perceived glamour — is more than a little yarn.

Which brings me to **Winona Ryder**. The eternal gamine may never want to hear those four itty letters again, but the iconic retailer got more than its share of free advertising from her little incident of 12 years ago. Stopped by guards at Saks' Beverly Hills location, she was accused of pilfering about \$5,500 worth of clothing and accessories, and later charged with four felonies. The rest:

history. *Girl Interrupted* wore a darling Marc Jacobs to court (complete with headband). A Saks security chief testified that Winona had told him she wasn't stealing, but rather "method acting" for a role. The actress agreed, eventually, to reimburse the store, plus bore three years probation, a bunch of fines, and 480 hours of community service. The media went mental. And though career-poisoned, all things considered — Winona's two Oscar noms notably both came before *L'Affaire Saks* — the actress can at least take solace, perhaps, in knowing she was Bling Ring before there was a Bling Ring.

And way before Winona, there was Irving. The great **Irving Penn**. Indeed, the aura of the store goes back enough that, at one point, he — one of the most prolific and celebrated photographers of the 20th century — once served as Saks' art director. And in 1924, when the brand first opened, between 49th and 50th, in New York City — many owners ago — "shoppers in fur coats and pearls mobbed the sales floors," as *The New Yorker* wrote in a post this week, with the first package out its doors bound for 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. A "silk top hat, sent to President **Calvin Coolidge**."

In both *Vogue* and *vogue* was also this blast-past: the wife of magazine maestro **Alexander Liberman** (the dominant creative force for more than half a century at Condé Nast Publications). Named **Tatiana du Plessix Liberman**, she was affectionately known as Tatiana of Saks and also once considered the finest hat-maker around. "For over three decades," her daughter **Francine du Plessix Gray** writes in her memoir, the Geisha-milliner "had her own custom-design salon at Saks Fifth Avenue where ... she advised thousands of women how to lure men, keep their husbands, and enchant their luncheon companions through the proper tilt of a beret or the sly positioning of a black dotted veil."

A long time ago, indeed.

Though Hudson's Bay has no paucity of pedigree itself — the company, hatched by English royal charter in 1670, is older than both Canada and the U.S. — it now finds itself wrapping its cozy, striped blanket around some additional iconography. Think Farrah Fawcett's one-piece swimsuit. Poster-friendly and purchased, legend has it, at Saks.

And with Canada's "big get" also comes some extra-special alumni, so to speak — both in life, and in art. In the film *Shopgirl*, **Claire Danes** meet-cutes **Steve Martin** while peddling evening gloves at the same Saks where Ms. Ryder had her downfall. In glorious reality, meanwhile, **Gene Hackman** was once on his knees quite regularly at a shop on the other coast. Lex Luthor, you see, used to be a ladies' shoe salesman at Saks.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch:

Julianne Moore was found enjoying some Lazy Susan action with her family last weekend at Toronto-go-to Dynasty, in Yorkville ... those Dsquared twins, **Dean** and **Dan Caten**, back at home, and spotted doing the all-new Cibo, on King West, Wednesday night ... **Peter Gallagher** out of *The O.C.* and, here on Dundas, eyespied grabbing a bite this week at The Grove.



Saks in Beverly Hills played a starring role when Steve Martin met Claire Danes in *Shopgirl*. 20th Century Fox

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