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Sex and Lies in a Hollywood Media Empire

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THE TIMES

JAMES B. STEWART
& RACHEL ABRAMS

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Daily Beast

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Also by James B. Stewart

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The Epic Battle for a Hollywood Media Empire

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Penguin
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First published in the US by Penguin Press,
an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, New York, in 2023
First published in the UK by Cornerstone Press in 2023
Published in Penguin Books 2024
001

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Designed by Amanda Dewey

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorised representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–1–804–94620–6

www.greenpenguin.co.uk

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FROM JAMES:
For Benjamin Weil

FROM RACHEL:
For my parents, Alice and Ian

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Contents

Preface *xi*

Trailer *1*

Season 1

EPISODE 1. "I'm Going to Hell Anyway" *9*

EPISODE 2. "Sumner in a Skirt" *24*

EPISODE 3. Sumner Will Live Forever *37*

EPISODE 4. The Inner Circle VIP Social Club *45*

EPISODE 5. "What's Mine Is Yours" *54*

EPISODE 6. "You Know How He Is about Women" *72*

EPISODE 7. "I Want My $45 Million Back" *79*

EPISODE 8. "This Is Your Family" *92*

EPISODE 9. "You Want to Go to War?" *102*

Season 2

EPISODE 1. "I'd Better Not Tell Manuela" *113*

EPISODE 2. "Operation Freedom" *121*

EPISODE 3. "I Never Thought I'd See You Again" *127*

EPISODE 4. "I'm Not Going to Fire Him" *137*

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EPISODE 5. "This Is Your Battle, Not Mine" *145*
EPISODE 6. "A Public Spectacle" *154*
EPISODE 7. "A Modern-Day Love Story" *162*
EPISODE 8. "No One Likes Drama" *173*
EPISODE 9. "An Overwhelming Stench of Greed" *181*
EPISODE 10. "Don't Go Near This" *190*

Season 3

EPISODE 1. "We All Did That" *205*
EPISODE 2. "If Bobbie Talks" *213*
EPISODE 3. "I Was a Good Guy" *219*
EPISODE 4. "I Feel Sick All the Time" *227*
EPISODE 5. "This Is Insanity" *240*
EPISODE 6. "Pencils Down" *250*
EPISODE 7. "All Out War" *257*

Season 4

EPISODE 1. A "Blatant Abuse of Power" *265*
EPISODE 2. "I Was Never a Predator" *275*
EPISODE 3. "What the Hell Are You Doing?" *282*
EPISODE 4. "Let's Not Get Ahead of Ourselves" *293*
EPISODE 5. "He Wants to Destroy Me" *303*
EPISODE 6. "This Is a Deal Breaker" *314*
EPISODE 7. "A Once-Unfathomable Outcome" *320*

Epilogue *331*

Acknowledgments *345*
Notes *351*
Index *385*

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You are seeing a great company in a civil war and there are bodies all over the road.

—Leslie Moonves, former chairman and chief executive of CBS, in confidential testimony on September 9, 2018

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Preface

I can say every report about CBS' toxic work environment is true," the October 2018 email to *The New York Times* tip line read. "This case enrages me so much, and it breaks my heart to look behind the curtain and see the ugliness and moral bankruptcy of institutions and people I admired since childhood."

The "case" was that of CBS chairman and chief executive Leslie Moonves. Moonves had resigned just a month earlier, the same day *The New Yorker* published the second of two articles detailing the accounts of twelve women accusing him of unwanted sexual advances. CBS had launched an internal investigation to determine, among other issues, whether Moonves should receive $120 million in severance pay.

In many ways Moonves's sudden departure had been only the beginning of the story. At the *Times*, the two of us—media reporter Rachel Abrams and business columnist James B. Stewart—were separately pursuing different angles. Rachel, who'd contributed to Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey's Pulitzer Prize–winning coverage of movie executive Harvey Weinstein, was focusing on the CBS internal investigation. Was the company really trying to get to the bottom of what had happened, or—as with so many self-directed corporate investigations—was it trying to sweep the scandal under the rug and protect other powerful interests? James was exploring the inner workings of the CBS

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board and how it had handled the accusations against its chief executive.

After the email landed in the *Times*'s "tip jar," a screener forwarded it to Jim Windolf, the *Times*'s media editor. He in turn sent it to Rachel. She was heading out that day when she passed James at his desk in the *Times*'s third-floor newsroom. They barely knew each other, but Rachel paused because she'd heard he, too, was looking into Moonves and CBS. She described the email, and he was excited: the source sounded like someone who could both confirm and expand upon what he was hearing from other people, which was that the real reasons for Moonves's departure had been far more intriguing than reported and had even involved an attempt at extortion.

Rachel spoke to the source that evening. Her impression was that the source's motive for reaching out and putting a career at risk was altruistic: having closely followed the #MeToo movement, this person didn't want to see men get away with abusing their power by exploiting women and then covering it up. Rachel felt the source was equally interested in the structures that enabled such behavior—in this case a public corporation. She was confident the source had no allegiance to any of the warring factions at CBS.

This source became one of a number of people who turned over hundreds of pages of original material—emails, texts, interview notes, internal reports—documenting an astonishing saga of sex, lies, and betrayal at the highest levels of a major corporation.

At CBS, the #MeToo movement had collided explosively with the corporate boardroom. Moonves was the first chief executive of a major publicly traded company forced to resign for predatory sexual conduct. (The much smaller Weinstein Company was privately owned.)

And Moonves wasn't just any chief executive. As a leading media and entertainment company with a vaunted news division, CBS had an outsize influence on American politics and culture. Under Moonves's leadership, the CBS network had gone from last to first place in the

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ratings and stayed there for over ten years. CBS stock had more than doubled in price. *The Hollywood Reporter* named Moonves the most powerful person in entertainment. He had earned over $700 million during his tenure, making him one of the highest-paid chief executives in the country.

For all his power and influence, Moonves still reported to a board of directors with the power to hire, fire, or otherwise discipline or reward him. At CBS, members of the board included a former secretary of defense, a former head of the NAACP, the former dean of Harvard Law School, and an Academy Award–winning film producer. But they could be replaced by a controlling shareholder that exercised 80 percent of the shareholders' voting rights.

That controlling shareholder was National Amusements Incorporated, a movie theater chain and holding company for a media empire assembled by the ninety-five-year-old and increasingly infirm Sumner M. Redstone. Sumner owned Viacom (the entertainment company that included Paramount Pictures and cable channels MTV, Comedy Central, and Nickelodeon) and CBS. In recent years he had largely ceded control to his sixty-four-year-old daughter, Shari Redstone, who was vice chair of both the CBS and Viacom boards and might—or might not—be his heir apparent.

Shari Redstone was in many ways an unwilling participant, dragged into the drama because her father's increasingly erratic and bizarre behavior threatened his family's fortune and legacy—everything he'd spent decades building. She was largely unversed in the ways of Hollywood, unprepared for the all-male bastion and deep-seated gender stereotypes that greeted her, and repeatedly underestimated, especially by her own father.

Moonves and his allies found Shari's attempts to assert herself and play a role in running CBS to be intolerable. Just months before he was forced to resign, Moonves had declared war on the Redstone family by seeking to strip them of their voting power. One of the mysteries we

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confronted was why Moonves would have unleashed a corporate civil war knowing (as he did) that his predatory sexual past was at great and imminent risk of being publicly revealed.

Of course, the great media moguls—from Louis B. Mayer to Adolph Zukor, to Redstone himself—had never worried about such issues. They were all white men whose power and authority went unquestioned no matter how unbridled their outbursts of temper or insensitive or even bigoted their treatment of women and minorities.

Their boards of directors, charged with protecting all shareholders, were little more than window dressing for their autocratic control. Sumner boasted that the Viacom board had never defied his wishes.

In their world, sexual indiscretions were as routine as deals cut on the eighteenth tee at the Bel Air Country Club. Though hardly confined to the business of media and entertainment, the notion of the "casting couch"—sex in return for a job or a part—got its name in Hollywood. Rumors about Harvey Weinstein, the head of Miramax and then the Weinstein Company, had circulated for years without getting in the way of his many Academy Awards. If anything, it was the women who bore the brunt of the criticism—the "bimbos" using sex to extort something from powerful men. The veteran Hollywood producer and CBS board member Arnold Kopelson seemed baffled by concerns over Moonves's alleged sexual advances in the workplace. "We all did that," he said dismissively.

Hollywood's traditional business model had thrived for decades on cable fees and theatrical film rentals. That was the model Sumner Redstone had mastered and dominated. It had made him a billionaire. But at CBS—as well as every other major media and entertainment company—that world was crumbling under the combined assault of technological advances and changing cultural norms. Netflix, the entertainment streaming service that had already crushed Viacom's Blockbuster DVD-rental business, had nearly 210 million global subscribers.

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It was creating its own content in direct competition with Viacom's Paramount Pictures and CBS television. The new world of direct-to-consumer streaming and cable cord-cutting called for a radical change in strategy at every traditional media company.

The workplace was also undergoing radical change—not just from #MeToo but from a reinvigorated Black Lives Matter movement and ongoing advances in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. The chief executive as autocrat was giving way to a more plural, democratic governance model that recognized the competing interests of diverse customers, employees, and communities as well as shareholders.

All these forces played out in Redstone's media empire. They unleashed a torrent of litigation among the warring factions fighting for dominance as Sumner's authoritarian grip weakened and his daughter tried to assert herself. While the clashes at Viacom and CBS may have been especially bitter and personal, the same forces are colliding to varying degrees at every public company confronted with generational turnover, fast-changing technology, and rapidly evolving social norms.

Many of the often-startling twists in the Redstone saga made headlines in the tabloids, Hollywood trade publications, the national media, even Sumner's own CBS News. But these stories only hinted at the drama inside Sumner's lavish Beverly Hills mansion, Paramount's Times Square headquarters, the CBS boardroom at Black Rock, and previously secret legal proceedings in courthouses from Los Angeles to Boston to Delaware.

Our reporting led us to a cast of characters that included not just top corporate executives, board members, and Redstone family members but glamorous paramours, a former soap opera and reality-TV star, a down-at-the-heels talent agent mounting a comeback, and a celebrity matchmaker, all drawn to the spoils of a multibillion-dollar fortune and the mythmaking allure of Hollywood.

As we dug deeper into the story over three years of reporting, we gained access to hundreds of pages of original material. We obtained

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additional information from court files, much of it sealed from public view. With litigation continuing—and the threat of more lawsuits hovering over every participant—many sources asked to remain confidential. The source who initially reached out to the *Times* declined to be identified or cooperate further for this book. Other sources are identified in the notes.

All of this material afforded a detailed and unprecedented look at the usually secret inner workings of two public companies, their boards of directors, and a wealthy family in the throes of seismic change. For many of these people, money, power—even love—was never enough.

The drama that unfolded may have occurred at Viacom and CBS, but the recent drumbeat of greed, backstabbing, plotting, and betrayal at the upper levels of American business and society has hardly been confined to one or two companies or one wealthy family and its hangers-on. It's no wonder there has been a growing backlash against what many Americans see as self-serving entertainment and business elites who, no matter how bad their behavior or serious the consequences, emerge with their fortunes intact or even enhanced, ready and able to step out onto the next red carpet that lands at their feet.

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Trailer

Actor George Pilgrim wasn't getting many parts these days, but he still scanned the trades. On June 25, 2014, he noticed an item about the billionaire Sumner Redstone: "Sydney Holland, the 43-year-old girlfriend of the 91-year-old mogul, has been waging litigation for 10 months against Heather Naylor, a singer who starred on the short-lived MTV series *The Electric Barbarellas*," *The Hollywood Reporter* disclosed.

There was a photo of Holland next to a frail-looking Redstone, who controlled a media empire ranging from the CBS television network to Paramount Pictures and cable channels MTV, Comedy Central, and Nickelodeon.

Pilgrim thought Holland was gorgeous. And he detested Naylor. Pilgrim was developing a reality-TV series, *Search IV Truth*, about paranormal phenomena and had tangled with her after he tried to recruit one of her employees.

Pilgrim impulsively tapped out a message to Holland on Facebook: "So glad you're taking down Heather Naylor," Pilgrim wrote. "I have so much Shit on her!!! Call me anytime."

At age forty-nine Pilgrim still had the chiseled physique, high cheekbones, blue eyes, and dark-blond hair that had landed him a three-year contract on the long-running soap opera *Guiding Light*, a featured part in the 1994 camp horror classic *Tammy and the T-Rex*, and a role in the

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Showtime erotic cable series *Red Shoe Diaries*, which aired in the mid-1990s. In 1996 he was featured in a photo spread, "Hunks in Trunks," in *Cosmopolitan* magazine's All About Men issue. More recently, he'd appeared in an episode of the reality series *Uncovering Aliens* as "one of the foremost experts on the wild, wild UFO West."

Pilgrim also had a prison record and a past that could have come from the pages of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

Pilgrim had starred in a VH1 reality-TV series, *Hopelessly Rich*, which chronicled his courtship of Louise Hay, a blond aspiring actress from Scotland. Pilgrim was having an affair with Hay, but little else about the program was true. Pilgrim was not, as he represented himself, George William Randolph Hearst III, the wealthy great-grandson of media tycoon William Randolph Hearst. And Hay did not, as she maintained, have a billionaire father. But on-screen, their romance blossomed. At show's end, a bikini-clad Hay chartered a yacht and popped a bottle of champagne to celebrate, even though "I still can't trust George as far as I can pick him up and lob him."

Pilgrim/Hearst did have the trappings of wealth—a new jet-black BMW 740i, a matching twin-turbo Porsche 911 Carrera, and a mansion in the Hollywood Hills with sweeping views of downtown Los Angeles. He'd even bought at auction Hearst's original desk from San Simeon. Pilgrim's real father had abandoned the family when he was nine, and it comforted and inspired him to think of the great newspaperman as a father figure and mentor. Posing as a Hearst heir also "got me entry to A-list parties, dates with hot women, and acceptance in the circles I'd always longed to travel in," he'd written in a first draft (subsequently deleted) of his autobiography. He was calling his book *Citizen Pilgrim*, the title a reference to Orson Welles's classic *Citizen Kane*.

But the reality show had proved his undoing. He knew appearing on the show was "an insane risk," but "my own stupidity, my own need to stoke my ego" caused him to do it anyway, he wrote.

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After billboard ads for *Hopelessly Rich* showed pictures of Pilgrim interspersed with archival footage of William Randolph Hearst, the (real) Hearst family sued him. VH1 pulled the series from distribution. And the feds closed in. Pilgrim pleaded guilty to tax evasion for a scheme in which he sold millions of dollars in ads in nonexistent publications. He'd served two and a half years in Los Angeles's Metropolitan Detention Center. (Pilgrim's costar, Louise Hay—later Louise Linton—married Pilgrim's lawyer, Ronald Richards, divorced him, and eventually married Donald Trump's future treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin.)

Since his release from prison Pilgrim had been living with his mother and stepfather in Sedona, Arizona. While in Los Angeles he stayed with his current girlfriend, Amy Shpall, a former talent agent with an executive producer credit for the Bravo fitness reality show *Work Out*.

Pilgrim no longer partied with celebrity friends like the action director Michael Bay. His acting career had also withered, though he didn't understand why everyone focused on his criminal record rather than his acting talent. Wesley Snipes and Robert Downey Jr. had criminal records, too, but they landed leading roles.

Still, he thought he could join forces with Holland to get his reality show off the ground.

Holland hadn't answered his Facebook post, his tantalizing reference to her nemesis Heather Naylor notwithstanding. That didn't stop Pilgrim. Women had always found him irresistible, as long as he persisted.

"I know who has your laptop," he wrote next. In her lawsuit, Holland alleged Naylor had stolen it.

Still no answer.

"Congrats on your beautiful child!!!" he wrote, referring to Holland's new daughter, Alexandra Red, whom Pilgrim had seen in Holland's Facebook postings.

Then he tried something more sexually explicit: "I think your hot!!" and "Damn I'm hung."

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Her continued silence prompted an outburst: "I could say Fuck u!! To not responding!!! But I can't you are a real class act. Call me."

The barrage finally worked.

"Who is this??" Holland wrote back. "Sorry I never read Facebook. I will call you tomorrow and thank you for reaching out to me!"

When Holland called Pilgrim, she told him she cared for a "high-profile individual" and suggested they meet in a very visible location: the rooftop pool at the Peninsula Beverly Hills hotel, an "A-List playground" according to travel website Oyster.

Pilgrim borrowed his girlfriend's BMW to get there. According to Pilgrim, when he got to the rooftop pool area, Holland was sitting at a small cocktail table. She was on one of her three cell phones and held up a manicured finger to acknowledge Pilgrim's arrival while continuing her conversation, which involved some kind of wire transfer of a large sum of money.

Pilgrim's practiced eye quickly took in her Birkin bag, the Rolex watch, the Jimmy Choo shoes. The phone conversation ended and Holland slowly removed her oversize sunglasses to gaze directly at Pilgrim.

All he saw was her blue-lavender eyes.

Holland revealed that the "high-profile individual" she had mentioned was Sumner Redstone. Did Pilgrim know who that was?

He'd heard the name, he said.

Sumner owned the Paramount movie studio, Holland explained. He owned book publisher Simon & Schuster. He was one of the most powerful men in Hollywood. He was a billionaire. Because of her relationship to Sumner, Holland could make things happen for Pilgrim: a book, a movie—anything he wanted.

Pilgrim reached out and touched her hand. He felt something like an electric current.

Pilgrim did tell Holland some of what he knew about Naylor and her relationship to Sumner. But the conversation soon shifted to how Holland could help Pilgrim. She proposed buying the movie rights to

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Citizen Pilgrim for her production company. After two hours of intense conversation, they rose to leave.

They were alone as they waited for the elevator. Suddenly Holland grabbed Pilgrim and passionately kissed him.

Downstairs, they parted, and Pilgrim walked alone to his car, which he'd parked at a nearby Starbucks. His cell phone rang.

"Did you feel that?" Holland asked.

He did, but he pointed out he was living with another woman.

"Don't worry about her," Holland said. Holland would take care of him now. Her psychic had just predicted she'd meet someone like him.

Pilgrim contemplated Holland's offer as he drove back along the Pacific Coast Highway. Maybe it was time to stop hustling and just give in.

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Season 1

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EPISODE 1

"I'm Going to Hell Anyway"

Of course, Pilgrim knew more about Sumner Redstone than he let on. Everyone in Hollywood and on Wall Street knew who the billionaire mogul was.

And Holland was hardly just Sumner's caregiver. Even *The Hollywood Reporter*'s description of her as his "girlfriend" fell far short of the mark. Unknown beyond a few people in Sumner's family and inner circle, Holland—along with her ally Manuela Herzer—was well on her way to controlling two of America's leading media and entertainment companies.

As Holland had bragged to Pilgrim, she could get Sumner Redstone to do pretty much whatever she wanted, though she left out that she and Sumner were engaged and she had a rare nine-carat canary-yellow diamond ring to prove it. Being Sumner's fiancée, as opposed to wife, conferred certain advantages. There was no need for a prenuptial agreement, and it left Holland free to pursue other interests, both financial and romantic.

In these she was abetted by her alliance with Manuela Herzer, a striking blond who years earlier had dated Sumner after sitting next to him at a dinner party hosted by Sumner's close friend, the producer Robert Evans. Herzer had complained she couldn't get a dinner reservation at the celebrity-studded Hollywood restaurant Dan Tana's. Sumner was a regular—and said he'd take her there the next night.

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Sumner was soon calling her "the love of his life." He bought her a $3.85 million house in Beverly Hills and made her a joint tenant of his apartment in New York's Carlyle Hotel. After two years, he'd proposed marriage but Herzer had declined. The affair turned platonic, but the two remained friends and confidants. While Herzer's house was undergoing renovations, she'd moved into the Beverly Park mansion with Sumner and Holland—and stayed.

As a billionaire, Sumner certainly had more than enough wealth to go around. Holland and Herzer hoped Sumner might replace his grandchildren with them in the supposedly irrevocable trust that on his death conveyed his ownership stakes in his media empire. Thanks to Sumner's generosity, the pair had already amassed a vast fortune, a war chest with which to pursue their larger ambitions. They had hired a prominent New York estates lawyer to explore their options. And Holland had already initiated efforts to have Sumner adopt her daughter, Alexandra, putting her in the line of succession.

There was only one major obstacle: Sumner's daughter, Shari Redstone.

At age sixty Shari was petite (five feet two inches tall) and, like her father, spoke with a Boston-area accent. She embraced the dress code of the professional businesswoman, favoring simple black skirts and jewel-toned blazers that set off the reddish-blond hair she had inherited from her father. She owned 20 percent of National Amusements—not enough to control anything, but enough to secure a seat in the boardroom. Shari's relationship with her father was, to put it mildly, complicated. Over the years, she had clashed bitterly with her father, sometimes publicly. At the same time she craved his affection and approval, which he dangled frequently before her (especially when he needed something) but then withdrew. Shari had nonetheless hung on as president of National Amusements and held the title of vice chair and board member at both CBS and Viacom.

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Shari, naturally, followed her father's erratic late-life romantic entanglements with mounting dismay. She and Holland maintained, on the surface, a polite coexistence, even though they had little in common. Shari had graduated from law school, practiced law in Boston, raised a family, and held an executive position at National Amusements for years. Holland had skipped college and lurched from one unsuccessful business venture to another (including a dating service for high–net worth men). Before meeting, dating, and moving in with Sumner, she had been constantly pursued by creditors. She wore her glossy, raven hair long, owned an enormous collection of designer shoes, and favored provocative dresses—especially in faux animal prints—that flattered her figure. Above all, she wanted to appear "chic," to use one of her favorite words.

Holland felt she had gone to considerable lengths to reassure and cultivate Shari, insisting that she did her best "to bring the feuding family together." But in Shari's estimation, Holland had done everything she could to drive a wedge between her and her father. By and large, she accepted that her father had made his choice, and it was his life. As she wrote to her children in 2014, "I have come to the conclusion that there is absolutely nothing that I can do" about Holland and Herzer, whom she referred to as "S and M."

Privately, she was far more blunt: "I am not going to that home with Sydney's baby living there," she wrote to her sons after Alexandra was born. In another email to her children, she referred to Holland and Herzer as "whores."

Sumner Redstone was hardly the first or last aging single man to fall for a much younger woman. But he was surely one of the richest, with a fortune estimated at over $5 billion that year. And he was one of the most powerful: he would ultimately determine the fate of two

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major corporations with thousands of shareholders and employees and hold significant roles in the cultural and political life of the nation.

While Sumner maintained a lifelong fixation with the performance and value of his business empire—even into his nineties, he monitored every movement in Viacom's share price on multiple stock tickers mounted inside his home, even in his bedroom—as he grew older, he became increasingly indiscreet about his personal life.

Close colleagues watched in dismay as the once-brilliant, driven businessman developed a bizarre fixation on eternal life and indulged himself in long-suppressed sexual impulses. It would be difficult to pinpoint exactly when, but over the years his indiscretions began to affect his companies. His film and television executives grumbled about the women their boss suddenly wanted on a TV show, in a meeting, or working at Viacom. The luckiest women he dated wound up with millions of dollars in cash, expensive houses, Viacom stock, and other assets.

Perhaps Sumner was making up for lost time. He had come from modest circumstances. He was born in 1923 to Bella (later Belle) and Max (later Michael) Rothstein, known as Mickey, who anglicized the family name to Redstone. The family lived briefly in a Boston tenement with no bathroom, according to Sumner. His father "peddled linoleum," Sumner wrote, moved into the liquor business, and eventually owned two drive-in movie theaters through a company Sumner later christened National Amusements Incorporated, often abbreviated as NAI. Eventually the family, now flush, took up residence in Boston's stately Copley Plaza Hotel.

"My mother had one dedication in her life, which was my education," he wrote in his 2001 autobiography, the aptly titled *A Passion to Win*. He told colleagues that his mother punished him if he made a mistake in piano lessons or failed to earn a perfect grade at the prestigious Boston Latin School. At the same time, she doted on him while all but ignoring his brother.

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Sumner graduated at the top of his class from Boston Latin, a feat that earned him guaranteed admission and a scholarship to Harvard College. "I had no social life. I had no friends," he wrote. "I knew that any girl I took out would not be good enough for my mother."

At Harvard he "studied all the time." In just two years he had enough credits to graduate. He excelled at languages, mastering formidably difficult Japanese, and in 1943, before graduating, he joined the military to help crack Japanese codes. Harvard eventually granted him his degree (although he hadn't completed the four-year residency requirement) and he went on to Harvard Law School. The next year, at twenty-four, he married Phyllis Raphael, the blond, vivacious daughter of a prosperous department store owner whom Sumner met at a temple dance (even though her wealthy family looked down on the Redstones). Their son, Brent, was born in 1951, and Shari in 1954. Sumner joined the family drive-in movie business and ruthlessly outmaneuvered his brother for control. Beginning in the 1960s, he converted the drive-ins into a chain of movie theaters, building multiscreen indoor cinemas on the drive-ins' suburban sites. Sumner coined the word *multiplex*. He developed a prodigious knowledge of the movie distribution business and was obsessed with his theaters' ticket sales. He knew every film playing on every screen and memorized the weekend box office.

He was a micromanager, and little escaped his attention. When *Jaws* opened at a National Amusements theater in Davenport, Iowa (population 100,000), he personally wrote to the editor of the *Quad-City Times* to compliment the newspaper's review of the blockbuster shark thriller as unusually "perceptive" and "brilliant film-making."

A formative experience of Sumner's adult life was a fire that occurred in March 1979 while he was staying at the Copley Plaza, the same hotel where he'd once lived with his parents. With the fire raging outside his room, Sumner escaped through a window and hung from a ledge as flames engulfed his hand and arm from inside the

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window frame. "The pain was excruciating but I refused to let go," he wrote in his autobiography. After being rescued from the ledge by a hook-and-ladder fire truck, Sumner required sixty hours of surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. Even then, his right hand was permanently deformed, little more than a gnarled claw.

In his book, Sumner maintained that the near-death experience didn't change him in the least: he was always fiercely driven to succeed, and "the will to win is the will to survive." But others detected a growing sense of invincibility. After the fire his ambitions expanded. His little-known National Amusements chain began buying large stakes in major entertainment companies: Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Communications, MGM Films, Columbia Pictures, and Time, Inc. The 1980s saw the emergence of the Michael Milken–financed corporate raiders, and Sumner joined their ranks.

His opponents consistently underestimated his business acumen and fierce determination. Viacom management, who bid against him in 1987, belittled him as a provincial Boston theater operator, an impression reinforced when Sumner showed up at Viacom's New York headquarters wearing a sports jacket he'd just bought at the discount chain Filene's Basement—with the tags still on it.

In his contest with media titan Barry Diller to acquire Paramount Communications in 1994, he ignored his bankers' financial projections and told Viacom's chief financial officer, Tom Dooley, "I just want to beat Barry. Do what we have to do to win." In his biggest conquest ever, Viacom paid $40 billion for CBS in 2000. Buoyed by the surging popularity of cable, the value of Sumner's assets soared. In October 2000 *Forbes* estimated his net worth at an astonishing $14 billion.

At the ripe old age of seventy-seven, Sumner Redstone had arrived as a full-fledged Hollywood mogul. In 2012 he got a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. For the ever-driven Sumner, that wasn't enough. He repeatedly told Viacom's communications director, Carl Folta, he wanted to be on the cover of *Time* magazine.

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Unmentioned in Sumner's dramatic account of his escape from the Copley Plaza was his longtime lover and companion Delsa Winer, who exited the hotel window ahead of him and emerged largely unharmed.

At least in those days Sumner was discreet. He extolled his devotion to family in *A Passion to Win*. Phyllis accompanied him to high-profile events like the Academy Awards even as he led a parallel life with Winer (she dropped the *e* after her divorce). He bought her a house and often stayed with her in suburban Lincoln, Massachusetts. Though he still found the time to take his daughter, Shari, out for ice cream, it could hardly have escaped Shari's notice that her father was frequently absent. Phyllis tolerated all this up to a point. Twice she'd sued Sumner for divorce, once in 1984 and again in 1993. Phyllis had a shrewd sense of timing, leveling her threats just as Sumner was focusing on new takeover targets. Both times he'd persuaded her to drop the suits out of fear she'd claim half his assets, thereby forcing him to break up his growing empire.

But when accounts of an affair with Christine Peters turned up in the tabloids in 1999, Phyllis was publicly humiliated. Peters, blond with prominent cheekbones, was a former model and the ex-wife of Hollywood producer and former hairdresser Jon Peters, though the couple had separated just two months after their wedding. Christine worked for Sumner's close friend producer Robert Evans, who first introduced her to Sumner. Evans, a notorious womanizer and sybarite, not only was Sumner's friend but also had a lucrative production deal with Viacom's Paramount Pictures. Soon after meeting, Sumner and Peters were spotted by paparazzi vacationing together in Sardinia. Phyllis hired a private detective, who produced photos of Sumner and Peters holding hands in Paris after dining at the famed La Tour d'Argent restaurant. After the Rupert Murdoch–owned *New York Post* plastered

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photos of the pair on its front page, Sumner flew into a towering rage witnessed by top Viacom executives. Using a string of expletives colorful even by Sumner's standards, he blamed his rival media mogul Murdoch, convinced that he was behind the embarrassing publicity. (The *Post* had actually bought the photos from the photographer working for Phyllis.)

Armed with evidence of Sumner's infidelity, Phyllis filed for divorce, citing both "adultery" and "cruel and unusual treatment." She demanded half of his fortune, a share to which she was entitled under Massachusetts law. This time Phyllis didn't back down, and her lawyers embarked on protracted negotiations. An exasperated Sumner told his daughter, Shari, that he'd never marry again.

The Peters affair also brought down the curtain on Sumner's long relationship with Winer, now in her early seventies. She, too, felt betrayed after reading the tabloid coverage. Still, Sumner sent her huge flower bouquets on her birthday for the rest of her life.

Despite his vow to never marry again, Sumner proposed marriage to Peters almost immediately after divorcing Phyllis. She declined. "I just didn't see myself married to him because he was so demanding and got his way in everything he did," she later wrote in a *Hollywood Reporter* essay. Her refusal infuriated him. He dictated and faxed her a letter saying he hated her, but as was typical with his outbursts, a week later he was pleading for her friendship. Peters disclosed that their ensuing platonic relationship continued for eighteen years despite his public "rudeness"—"he had been banned from every restaurant in L.A."—which included an incident in Hawaii during which Sumner summoned a chef to his table, then threw his steak at him, claiming it was overcooked.

"Why are you so mean to people?" Peters asked.

"I don't care," he replied. "I'm going to hell anyway."

Peters indulged him and continued to have lunch with him at his regular table at the Hotel Bel-Air.

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With his $14 billion fortune and control of movie and television studios, there was no shortage of women willing, even eager, to be seen with Sumner, an unlikely lothario at any age, least of all pushing eighty. He was six feet tall and had once had thick, wavy reddish-blond hair, perhaps his best feature, though he now dyed it varying shades of pink. (One of his advisers witnessed Sumner applying the dye himself in a bathroom of his Carlyle Hotel apartment.) He had a weak chin and rounded cheekbones. Although he worked out with a trainer and was obsessed with antioxidants and vitamins, his physique was pear-shaped. He wore unfashionably wide, flamboyant ties, often set off by a black or dark-colored shirt.

That hadn't deterred Herzer from embarking on an affair with him. When she and Sumner met, she'd been taking tennis lessons at Evans's estate. Herzer was born in Argentina and was a naturalized American citizen. Her family must have been reasonably affluent: she'd been educated in France and was conversant in several languages. She'd already gone through a bitter divorce and at least one affair and had three children, two—Bryan and Christina—with her former husband, Eric Chamchoum, scion of a wealthy Lebanese family based in Nigeria; and the third—Kathrine—with her then-boyfriend Larry Hansel, founder of the Rampage teen clothing line. That relationship ended after Hansel went to court and got a restraining order against Herzer "based on allegations that she had physically attacked him in front of their daughter."

Despite a wealthy former husband and a romantic partner with whom she'd had a child, Herzer appears to have struggled to maintain an affluent Beverly Hills lifestyle. Judging from a series of lawsuits filed against her at the time by auto lease companies, a Century City condo association, and even her divorce lawyer, Herzer seems to have been dodging creditors. But she continued spending money on designer clothes, shoes, and jewelry, all to wear while mingling with Hollywood moguls.

So it's somewhat surprising that Herzer turned down Sumner's

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marriage proposal. Her only public explanation was that she wanted to devote herself to her children and wasn't interested in marrying again. Perhaps, like Holland, she'd realized that in twenty-first-century America marriage wasn't the only—or even the best—route to wealth and financial security.

After being rejected by Peters and Herzer, and still in negotiations over his divorce from Phyllis, Sumner found himself living alone in luxury hotels and searching for women to date. His mood swings and erratic romantic behavior became more pronounced. Steven Sweetwood, Sumner's stepnephew and a stockbroker who handled Viacom's stock buybacks, decided the answer might be a woman from an entirely different milieu than Hollywood. Sweetwood set Sumner up on a blind date with an elementary school teacher in Manhattan named Paula Fortunato, a friend of a colleague of his at Bear Stearns.

Fortunato, age thirty-eight, was living in a one-bedroom apartment on the Upper East Side. She'd never heard of Sumner Redstone or, for that matter, Viacom. Sumner was, by his own account, instantly smitten by the attractive brunette. After their first dinner, at Manhattan's Il Postino restaurant, he had a messenger deliver a packet of press clippings about him. He immediately asked her for another date.

Soon his limousine was routinely waiting to pick her up outside P.S. 158, where she taught third grade. They'd fly on the Viacom plane for weekends in Los Angeles, staying in suites at the luxurious Bel-Air or Beverly Hills hotels. They described themselves as inseparable. Sumner soon proposed marriage by offering her a choice from a tray filled with engagement rings. Fortunato picked one, although at first she was reluctant to wear it. But after Sumner prodded her, she showed off the ring at a restaurant dinner with talk show host Larry King.

After three years of intense negotiations, Sumner finally worked out a settlement with Phyllis that left him in full control of National Amusements and by extension Viacom and CBS. The divorce was finalized in 2002. Sumner would continue to vote all the shares. In re-

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turn, the shares themselves would be placed in an irrevocable trust for the benefit of Sumner while he lived, and then, after he died or became incapacitated, into a trust for his and Phyllis's children and grandchildren. There were five nonfamily trustees in addition to Sumner and Phyllis: George Abrams, a courtly, Harvard-trained Boston lawyer who advised Sumner in his divorce; David Andelman, his estate planning attorney; Philippe Dauman, his longtime corporate lawyer and a Viacom executive; and two other lawyers. Sumner and his staunch allies controlled a solid majority, and should anyone's loyalty to Sumner falter, Sumner retained the power to replace them.

As part of the settlement, Sumner also gave Phyllis half of his large stake in a pinball machine and video games maker, Midway Games, best known for its *Mortal Kombat* franchise, the fantasy fighting game introduced in 1992. Sumner knew Midway's management, since its pinball games had long been a fixture in National Amusement theaters, and seemed to think Midway was on the brink of a new hit game and corporate turnaround.

Redstone and Fortunato were married the following April at Temple Emanu-El on Fifth Avenue. Tony Bennett, Sumner's favorite singer, sang at the reception at the New York Public Library.

Having gotten a taste of the Hollywood lifestyle while dating Peters and Herzer, Sumner took his new bride to Beverly Hills. He paid close to $16 million for a sprawling eight-bedroom house with sweeping views of downtown Los Angeles from its infinity pool and adjoining hot tub. The seller and next-door neighbor in the gated Beverly Park enclave was actor Sylvester Stallone.

Sumner cultivated exotic koi in a front-yard pond with a waterfall, installed an elaborate tropical fish tank (the world's largest, he maintained) inside the house, and surrounded himself with TV screens constantly tuned to CNBC and Viacom's stock price. He operated as

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though he were still on eastern time. He'd rise at 4:00 a.m., don a robe, and settle into a soft chair near his fish tank to begin making calls to his East Coast–based executives.

Chief among them was Philippe Dauman at Viacom. The two were so close that a Viacom executive told *New York Times* reporter Amy Chozick that Dauman was "the son Sumner wishes he had" (much to Shari's dismay). Their relationship had been forged over more than three decades, ever since Dauman as a young lawyer at Shearman & Sterling had shrewdly attached himself to his firm's biggest client by personally delivering documents to Sumner at his Carlyle apartment. Over the years, Dauman guided Sumner through the hostile takeover of Viacom and the acquisitions of Paramount and then CBS. "We shed a lot of blood, sweat and tears in a very long process," Dauman said, as reported in the *Times*, trench warfare that made Dauman one of Sumner's "closest advisors and colleagues," as Dauman put it.

Sumner admired Dauman's intelligence—he had scored a perfect 1600 on the SAT when he was just thirteen—and his Columbia Law School pedigree. Dauman's parents were French and he'd attended the Lycée Français growing up in Manhattan, where his father was a photographer for *Life* magazine (he shot portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy). As an adult, Dauman always insisted on the French pronunciation of his name.

But his most conspicuous quality was his unswerving loyalty to Sumner, a fealty that bordered on the obsequious. Sumner is "the smartest person I've ever met," Dauman once gushed to the *Times*.

Loyalty was a virtue that Sumner, like many media moguls of his generation, both prized and demanded in his subordinates. It was no coincidence that his favorite movie was Paramount's *The Godfather*, the 1972 blockbuster whose characters elevated loyalty, nepotism, and the Mafia code of omertà over the rule of law. The title consciously invoked the Sicilian primacy of blood ties and quasi-family relationships

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in a world where no one else could be trusted. Sumner, too, constantly extolled the importance of family, notwithstanding his sexual indiscretions. He rewarded his surrogate son Dauman by making him a trustee of the Sumner M. Redstone National Amusements Trust and a Viacom board member. Dauman became Viacom's chief executive in 2006.

Sumner's next call was usually to Les Moonves, the actor–turned–television executive whose competitive drive propelled him into the upper ranks of Hollywood. In contrast to the cerebral, balding Dauman, a rare and awkward presence at red carpet events, Moonves was gregarious, handsome, charismatic, and firmly ensconced on Hollywood's A-list. He'd grown up in Valley Stream, Long Island, a middle-class suburb where boys all seemed to have nicknames ending in *y* (Moonves was "Moony"). He started acting at age nine at Camp Tioga in the Catskills and played basketball on the Temple Gates of Zion team.

Moonves broke into television with roles in *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *Cannon* and moved to Los Angeles, where he met and married the actress Nancy Wiesenfeld. He soon realized his future lay in producing rather than acting. He rose rapidly through the ranks of Lorimar Television, the producer of the hits *Dallas* and *Falcon Crest*. After Lorimar merged with Warner Bros., he became president of Warner Bros. Television and secured his place in television history by producing the NBC megahits *Friends* and *E.R.* He joined CBS in 1995 and vaulted the network from last to first place in the ratings on the strength of hits like *Survivor*, *CSI*, *NCIS*, and *Cold Case*. His ratings success earned him the nickname "the man with the golden gut."

Still, the once-struggling actor in Moonves never seemed far from the surface. Friends in a men's support group he joined in the mid-1980s thought it was what gave him his palpable drive to succeed. Moonves was intensely competitive, whether on the basketball court

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in pickup games or in charades—a game at which he excelled. "This is too intense for me," the famously intense producer Brian Grazer (*A Beautiful Mind*) observed after one charades session.

Like Sumner, Moonves was an entertainment mogul from the old school: he, too, quoted from *The Godfather* and prized loyalty in his subordinates. Unlike the lawyerly Dauman, he had his hand in every creative aspect of the business but delegated financial and legal details.

Delighted by CBS's ratings success and accompanying profits, Sumner largely left Moonves alone to run CBS as he saw fit. As he told a *Times* interviewer in 2004, he let Moonves "run with the ball."

Dauman may well have aspired to similar autonomy. Shari, for one, blamed Dauman for encouraging her father's move to the West Coast, which she saw as an attempt to distance Sumner both from his daughter and from Viacom headquarters, thereby cementing Dauman's control.

In 2006 Sumner agreed to cooperate with a *Vanity Fair* profile. Moonves was pressed into service to extol the virtues of Sumner's new wife: "There's no question, Paula brings out the better side of Sumner Redstone. Paula doesn't take any guff from him. She'll say, 'Sumner, behave yourself.' I don't know if it's true, but I hear she gives him demerits if he misbehaves. He's on a point system."

But the article garnered far more attention for its unsparing depiction of Sumner at the age of eighty-three: "He looks frail and has a senior moment or three, losing his train of thought, repeating stories, and asking that a question or two be repeated," wrote the reporter Bryan Burrough. Worse, as the interview ended, Sumner rose to shake the reporter's hand, tilted to one side, and collapsed.

Just months later, the Hollywood writer Nikki Finke reported on an angry outburst between Sumner and Paula in front of numerous onlookers at the premiere of the Paramount film *Stardust*, followed by a "meltdown" by Sumner at Dan Tana's—the celebrity hangout where

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