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## **Buzz**

# THE HEIRESS



Bryce Dallas Howard as Fisher and Chris Evans as Jimmy in Tennessee Williams' *THE LOSS OF A TEARDROP DIAMOND* courtesy of Paladin

**Bryce Dallas Howard, actor-director Ron Howard's daughter, takes the lead in this month's *The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond* before starring in *Eclipse*, the third installment of the *Twilight* series. Over breakfast at Silver Lake's LaMill restaurant, she dishes about her childhood and staying out of the limelight**

By Ed Leibowitz

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She has polished off her bowl of polenta with the candied pecans, brown sugar, and whipped mascarpone topping. The two jumbo-size croissants have likewise surrendered to an appetite as hearty as a French-Canadian lumberjack's. Actress Bryce Dallas Howard has finished breakfast, but Silver Lake's LaMill restaurant offers other comforts. The baroque yet rustic decor bears the stamp of Rubbish Interiors, a design

store across the street that is owned by friends of hers. The café music mix was put together by her best friend from high school, who is also godmother to her two-year-old son, Theo, and resides at the house Howard shares with her husband, actor Seth Gabel. Little wonder then that Howard has admitted LaMill into her carefully circumscribed universe.

This morning Howard has dressed for a Nantucket regatta circa 1952—conservative blue-and-white-striped blouse, crisp blue jeans neither distressed nor designer faded, and tan slippers with tiny bows. Her red hair is caught in a neat ponytail. “There’s a vibe I send to the paparazzi,” says Howard, laughing over a half-finished cup of hot cocoa. “It says, ‘Trust me, I’m not worth your time. I really only leave the house to go to the grocery store or LaMill.’ ”

The eldest daughter of actor-director Ron Howard, she has starred in M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Village* and *Lady in the Water*, done Shakespeare with Kenneth Branagh, and portrayed the new girlfriend of Tobey Maguire’s Peter Parker in *SpiderMan 3* as well as the pregnant wife of Christian Bale’s John Connor in *Terminator Salvation*. With only five years in film she has established herself as the kind of protean actress who doesn’t so much inhabit roles as haunt them. This month the 28-year-old Howard takes the lead in *The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond*, the first film in 20 years to be shot from a Tennessee Williams screenplay. Come summer she’ll play Victoria, the vampire who torments Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart in *Eclipse*, part three of the blockbuster *Twilight* saga. She might seem casual about her ability to maintain tabloid irrelevance in the face of such prominence, but it is a marvel of media engineering.

Howard had arrived the night before from Portland, where she’s a first-time producer on an untitled coming-of-age story written by Jason Lew, a college friend. Gus Van Sant, nominated for an Oscar last year for *Milk*, is directing. Although others showed interest, Howard and Lew went with Imagine Entertainment, which means that Ron Howard and Brian Grazer are coproducers. She had never worked alongside her father and is finding plenty to like about the experience. “It’s making me honestly yearn for more,” she says. “I just have so much respect for him, and he’s my mentor.” She has made inroads as a screenwriter and is in talks with a production company about a script she cowrote, *The Originals*, which she describes as *The Big Chill* meets *The Breakfast Club*.

Although her dad starred in *Happy Days*, and Henry Winkler is her godfather, Howard grew up less familiar with Richie Cunningham and the Fonz than most kids her age. “Our access to the TV was really restricted—highly restricted,” she says. “I never watched *Happy Days*, ever.” She didn’t sit through a full episode until after her *Tonight Show* debut at 23. Jay Leno gave her a DVD collection of the series. “He was like, ‘What’s your problem? You’ve got to see it,’ ” Howard says. “So I went home and watched it, and it was great.”