

Eureka, Archimedes! I have finally found her!  
The absolute flawless fashionista. The adage rings true in this particular instance: beautiful on the outside, even more beautiful on the inside.

GEORGE WAYNE

G-Dub's only complaint? Liya Kebede has had greatness thrust upon her. She needs to ramp up the profile. So many more need to be intrigued and inspired by this most incredible woman.

Is it any surprise she is from the land of Ethiopia? A land seemingly blessed for more reasons than one.

Q&A

Estée Lauder could not have found a more perfect woman of color with which to create beauty history.

## Liya Rising

Liya Kebede ON HER ETHIOPIAN CHILDHOOD AND THE ROUGH WORLD OF GLAMOUR

Ethiopian-born model Liya Kebede, 29, was praised by the fashion world as the very embodiment of modern beauty when she became the first woman of color to be named the face of Estée Lauder, in 2003. Now a wife and a mother of two, she spends less time on the runway and more in Africa raising money as a Goodwill Ambassador for the World Health Organization. Our correspondent catches up with Kebede.

**George Wayne:** You grew up in an affluent Ethiopia. Mother was in public relations. Father worked at the national airline. You grew up well off by Ethiopian standards. When was the first time you modeled?

**Liya Kebede:** In high school. I went to a French academy.

**G.W.** So you weren't really discovered by a photographer in the African bush.

**L.K.** Oh, the Iman story.

**G.W.** I know it's all myth.

**L.K.** You found out.

**G.W.** What would be the first superstar break—that catapult?

**L.K.** I think it would be 1999, getting to do the Tom Ford Gucci show.

**G.W.** Humility, grace, poise, charm—those are all your middle names. What sign are you?

**L.K.** I am a Pisces, and I think that's why.

**G.W.** Well, that virago at the height of "The Trinity"—Linda, Christy, Naomi—always used to say, "Why is it I don't have a beauty contract?" Well, now we know why.

**L.K.** Who is this?

**G.W.** That virago. What is your favorite Naomi Campbell horror story?

**L.K.** I don't have a Naomi Campbell horror story. I think she is a very interesting girl. I think this business is really tough. She does what she has to do. By the way, I used to have a poster of Naomi Campbell in my bedroom in Addis Ababa.

**G.W.** You created fashion history when you became the first Negress to have a beauty contract with Estée Lauder.

**L.K.** Oh my God, "Negress," where did you get that word in 2007?

**G.W.** That had to be a monumental day in your life when you first heard the news.

**L.K.** Yes, it is huge.

**G.W.** Well, think about it: the first woman of color ever to have such a lucrative contract with not just any house of beauty but the American house of beauty, iconic Estée Lauder! Tell me about this husband. Who is the luckiest man in the world?

**L.K.** I am actually the luckiest woman in the world.

He is wonderful. He is in finance.

**G.W.** And he is 20 years older than you, which I found to be rather odd.

**L.K.** Why?

**G.W.** What, was he some kind of Svengali?

"I don't have a Naomi Campbell horror story."



**L.K.** It was almost love at first sight. It's great.

**G.W.** You are in this glamorous business working with gorgeous beauties all the time. Does he get nervous?

**L.K.** He's a very secure man.

**G.W.** My one complaint is this: We do not see enough of Liya Kebede. As RuPaul would say, "Work the runway, sweetie." Stop coasting on that beauty contract, Liya Kebede! Tell me about your charity foundation.

**L.K.** Women in the world's poorest countries do not have access to the best medical care. When a woman is pregnant her chances of surviving childbirth are so low that more than half a million women die each year from complications during pregnancy or childbirth, which could easily be prevented. Sweden has a rate of nearly zero. All countries should have that rate.

**G.W.** This is where the Liya Kebede Foundation is trying to bring awareness.

**L.K.** I work with the World Health Organization as a Goodwill Ambassador.

**G.W.** Are you friends with that other glamorous ambassadress?

**L.K.** I met Angelina once.

**G.W.** What about Zahara? She needs to be friends with your two-year-old daughter, Rae.

**L.K.** Yes, they are around the same age. I would love to meet Zahara.

**G.W.** C'mon, Angelina! Get it together. Why do Ethiopians have such beautiful skin?

**L.K.** All those Estée Lauder products.

**G.W.** I can spot an Ethiopian from across the room. There is a special glow that is God-given. Thank you, Liya Kebede. That's a wrap.