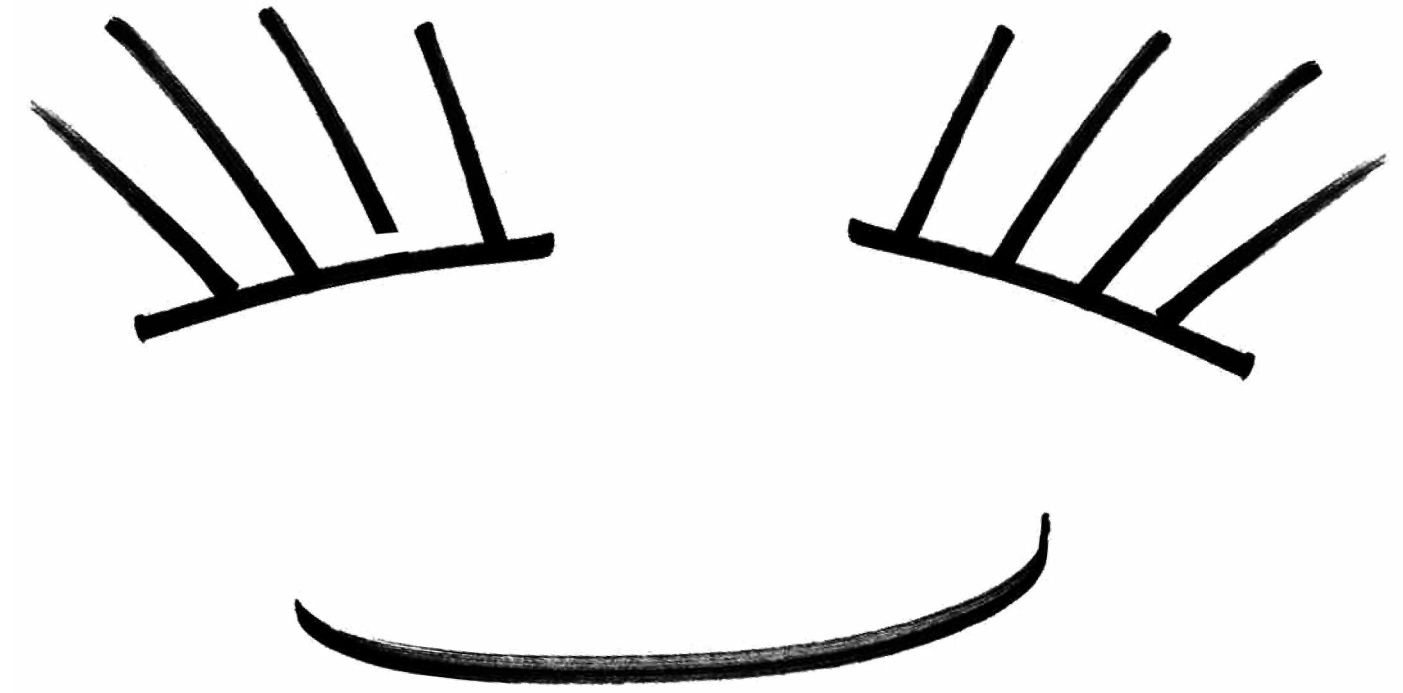


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The **FLIP SIDE** of  
*Katie Holmes*

*For an actress who became famous for playing to type and then even more famous for marrying against it, the "new" KATIE HOLMES is surprisingly well-adjusted. You might even call her normal*

WRITTEN BY LAUREN WATERMAN PHOTOGRAPHED BY CEDRIC BUCHET STYLED BY ANNE CHRISTENSEN



Tuxedo, \$6,875. **GIORGIO ARMANI**, 212-988-9191. Fedora, \$550, **PATRICIA UNDERWOOD**, 212-268-3774.

One doesn't know quite what to expect from Katie Holmes. At the beginning of her career, she was the typical ingénue, best known for her portrayal, on *Dawson's Creek*, of the literal girl-next-door. Even in her "edgier" big-screen projects, like *Go* and *Pieces of April*, an air of wholesomeness clung to her like dew.

But that all changed in 2005, when Holmes fell hard for one of the biggest movie stars in the world. Or rather, it changed when *he* fell for *her* and seemed to go a bit insane with—well, no one was quite sure what, but let's be generous and call it love. It's a testament to the weirdness of that situation that getting married and having a baby—albeit in not exactly that order—tarnished her reputation, and that her decision, in 2012, to leave her then-husband helped to bolster it. But that's exactly what happened.

Now the actress—who spent the years she was married to Tom Cruise dabbling in everything from jazz dance to fashion design—is working to re-establish herself in the field that first made her famous. She cur-

resemblance to the dead-eyed automaton she was so often accused of being. Instead, she's warm, bright and remarkably at ease. At her suggestion, we've met at a very collegiate-seeming Chelsea café, the kind of place where you order at the counter and choose your own table, and where macaroni and cheese is sold as an entrée, with "a cute salad" on the side. Holmes gets a coffee and two bread-plate-size chocolate-chip cookies—one of which, she reveals at the end of the interview, is for me. (It's the second time in as many weeks that she's spontaneously offered me some kind of cookie-related item, the first being a business card for a bake shop on Commerce Street.) She even agrees to sit at a sidewalk-adjacent two-top, which I've picked because it's quiet, but which I was sure she'd reject because of its proximity to passersby and to any (theoretical, as it turns out) paparazzi.

"I just try to live in a way that makes me happy," she explains when I ask how she copes with the still-intense level of attention paid to her personal life. (She's often been "linked" to various co-stars, and this year

**"There's definitely an awareness of the fact that people have camera phones and that your privacy is sometimes invaded."**

rently has four movies finished and awaiting release; add to that a fifth, *The Giver*, which is in theaters now, and that's only one film fewer than she made during the entirety of her seven-year relationship.

Holmes says that she was attracted to *The Giver*, an adaptation of a much-loved children's novel, in part because of the cast, which includes Jeff Bridges and Meryl Streep. "Meryl is just spectacular, so lovely. I wanted to ask her a million questions, like, 'What was that set like? How did you come up with that character?' but I thought, maybe not while we were working."

Holmes' performance, like those of several of the actors in the dystopia-set movie, is purposely emotionless, verging on robotic, and could almost be seen as a send-up of the way that she was perceived during her marriage. As the young protagonist's mother—called, simply, Mother—she's almost too perfectly cast. (She's also oddly affect-free at the start of an upcoming indie, *Miss Meadows*, in which she plays a prim-and-proper substitute teacher who happens to moonlight as a gun-toting vigilante.)

In person, though, the 35-year-old star bears little

tabloids have alleged romances with both Jamie Foxx and Jason Segel, although her publicist has issued the requisite denials.)

"There's definitely an awareness of the fact that people have camera phones, and that your privacy is sometimes invaded, but that's something that I think everyone has had to adjust to," she says. "Even early on, when I was a young actor and all of a sudden people knew who I was, my dad told me, 'Don't let that change how you live your life.' I've always sort of approached it that way. You have to continue to do the things you want to do and not let outside forces dictate."

Certainly, she appears to be embracing this ethos with regards to her work. Her upcoming projects are remarkably varied: Aside from *The Giver* and *Miss Meadows*, she's also starring in *Mania Days* (produced by Spike Lee) as a poet hospitalized for bipolar disorder, who falls in love with a similarly afflicted rapper. In *Woman in Gold*, based on the true story of a Holocaust survivor seeking to reclaim a painting seized by the Nazis, she appears opposite Helen Mirren and Ryan Reynolds, playing the wife of Reynolds' lawyer

character. She says she relished the chance to portray “a happy married couple, because it’s rare to see that.”

Perhaps most intriguingly, she joins an ensemble that includes Cherry Jones, Allison Janney, Jean Reno, William Hurt and Mark Rylance in actor Christian Camargo’s directorial debut, *Days and Nights*, a 1980s-set drama inspired by Chekhov’s *The Seagull*. “We shot everything at this old theater camp in Connecticut,” Holmes says. “It was a wonderful, creative time with all of these brilliant actors. Everyone gave themselves over to the story, which is sad but very beautiful.”

Yet Holmes brushes off the suggestion that these movies represent a concentrated effort to reclaim her career in the aftermath of her divorce. “It’s the life of

older you get, the more life experience you get, you start to understand storytelling better. So you’re a little bit more confident going in. You’re not afraid of getting fired: You just want to contribute.”

To that end, Holmes says that she’d like to try her hand at directing—she recently completed a short-form documentary, produced by Killer Digital for AOL. “I interviewed several women, including Jill Abramson [formerly of the *New York Times*], Jane Rosenthal from Tribeca Films, Renee Robinson from Alvin Ailey [American Dance Theater] and my friend Jeanne Yang.” (Yang was, until February, the co-designer of their shared fashion line, Holmes & Yang, which the pair decided to close because, Holmes says, “We felt

**“The older you get, the more life experience you get... you’re a little bit more confident going in. You’re not afraid of getting fired.”**

an actor,” she says lightly. “We don’t really have a lot of choice in the matter. You have dry spells, and then you have times when there is a lot of opportunity.”

Holmes does concede that she wasn’t as interested in acting for a few years there, but she attributes that to the arrival of her daughter—whose name, like that of her ex, remains unspoken throughout our 90-minute dialogue. (In the case of Suri, the motive seems to be an almost reflexive stab at discretion; she does refer to her often, but only as “my little one.” In the case of Cruise, though, it’s obvious that she’d prefer the subject not come up at all, although it’s impossible to tell whether she feels that way all the time or only when she’s on the record.) “I totally admire women who go back to work six weeks after giving birth,” she explains, “but when she was little, I was not ready. I was a very nervous mother—like, sleeping next to her crib—and I was in that mode for a long time.”

Still, it hardly matters whether her sudden flurry of films is intentional or not; either way, Holmes might just be on the verge of a resurgence. And if she is, she’s ready. As she says, “I think I’ve gotten more comfortable with acting over time. Early on, I could never get out of my head. I’d be thinking, ‘I have to get the job.’ And even when I had the job, I was afraid that I was going to get fired, or I just had the mentality of, ‘I need to be good enough.’ But the more projects you do, the

like it had run its course.”) She explains, “I sat down with each of them for an hour and talked about how being a woman has affected their career, what advice they’d have for girls moving to the big city. How they got through difficult times, how they learned.” It’s easy to see why she’d be attracted to that topic. So what did they tell her? “One thing that was very consistent was that things might not always happen exactly when you want them to. You have to be patient.”

It’s a message that she seems to have taken to heart. “I’m going to keep practicing directing,” she says, and she’d like to produce again, having enjoyed the experience on 2010’s *The Romantics*. But until then, she’s happy to keep on as a player in the company. “I could rehearse for years,” she says. “I love it. I’ve been doing this for a long time, but every experience is so different, based on [whom] you’re working with. I always try to go into a project with a goal in mind of what I want out of it for myself, in terms of what I want to learn.”

A few moments later, Katie Holmes muses, with some understatement, “It’s been an interesting journey. Even when I was young, I was like, ‘I hope I’m taking all of this in.’ When I was working with Michael Douglas [in 2000’s *Wonder Boys*], I was like, ‘Am I fully appreciating all of this?’ But I don’t know how you ever measure that, and I’ve always been kind of calm about it. I just want to be inspired.” ●

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