

The daredevil actress takes a different kind of risk—plunging headfirst into the

The Kidman Cometh



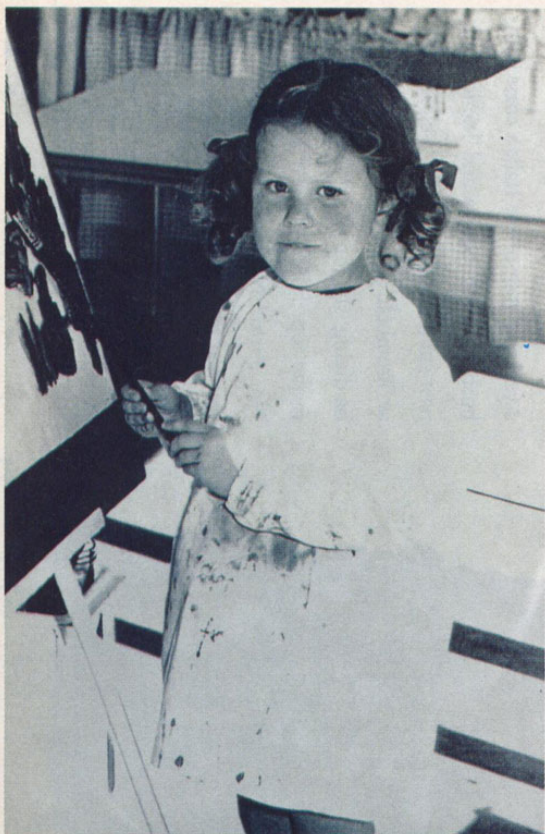
BY
Matt Mueller
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
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FUNNY THING happened on the way down Stromboli: Nicole Kidman got lost. Well, not that funny, admittedly. In fact, it was quite frightening. But the way Kidman tells it, the way she *is*, you can't help but want to laugh along with her. • It's not every day you find yourself moored next to an active volcano, as Kidman did while on a yachting tour of the Italian coast with husband Tom Cruise and friends this past summer. She wanted a closer look at Stromboli, so while Cruise went scuba diving, she found a guide to take her to the top. Hiking boots? No. Water? No. Socks? Negative. By the time she reached the summit, in her black Keds, the sun was going down. The guide suggested climbing down the other side

wrenching role of Isabel Archer in Jane Campion's 'The Portrait of a Lady'



PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST: At age four, left, and in *To Die For*. "People said, 'The script's not even funny,'" she says. "And I'm thinking, *My sense of humor must be off.*"

of the mountain, a more dangerous journey but a much shorter one—in daylight, anyway. At dusk on a mountain coated in black sulphuric ash, it soon became impossible to see anything. "There were moments there where, if you put one foot wrong, you fall and you're dead," says Kidman. "I like to do things that are dangerous. But this was stupid. I admit it."

Hours later, two Italian sky divers heard Kidman's cries and led the exhausted pair back down the mountain. Cruise, no stranger to rescue missions, had already made his way up the volcano and was halfway down the other side when he finally heard her voice on the emergency radio. "He ran to the top in an hour and a half, which is usually a three-hour hike," Kidman marvels, then snorts with laughter. "I know, very corny. I just remember thinking, So this is how I'm gonna go. Wow, I never would have predicted it to be this way." She shows off the bruises and scrapes that still decorate her body. "But now that I've survived it, I'm kind of proud of it. The people we were with said, 'We're inviting you back! This is fun, this game: Celebrity Search and Rescue, we're gonna call it!'"

Billy Zane, Kidman's costar in 1989's *Dead Calm*, calls her laugh infectious, and he's right. One second, it's a high-pitched flourish of merriment, the next a guttural, spontaneous guffaw, punctuated by sharp inhalations of

breath. People in her orbit can't help breaking out in smiles. Walking past the hip second-hand shops of Camden Town in north London, she is told by grinning passersby and shopkeepers that she is thinner, more beautiful, more radiant—oh heck, let's just get straight to the point: "Oi, Nicole, you're a babe!" a pair of workmen yell out. Kidman buckles up with laughter. "Thank you!" she yells back. She is not unaware of the dazzling impact she makes, but she appears completely unaffected by it. Her pale features are small and delicate, her skin translucent; she has only the finest of lines around her eyes. In a pair of black cigarette pants that emphasize her slender frame, and a light blue shirt that pales in comparison to the cerulean intensity of her eyes, she exudes confidence.

Kidman, Cruise, and their two children, three-and-a-half-year-old Isabella Jane and one-and-a-half-year-old Connor Antony, left for London in July in preparation for *Eyes Wide Shut*, a drama about sexual obsession and jealousy that the couple is set to start shooting in October, with Stanley Kubrick directing. But before tackling that, they were off to the Venice Film Festival for the world premiere of Kidman's new film, Jane Campion's adaptation of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, which opens in late December. The 29-year-old actress plays the novel's free-

spirited and high-minded heroine, Isabel Archer, an American adrift in late 19th-century Europe who inherits money and becomes trapped in a dissolute marriage. Hailed by some in Venice as brilliant, criticized by others as glacial, *Portrait* is by any measure a quantum leap, both in prestige and complexity, for Kidman.

"We're dealing with the dark side of attraction," she says. "Why do you choose the person that is wrong for you, when you should ultimately be searching for the person that's right? Jane and I both have had relationships like that. I find that fascinating, the incredible power one person can have over another. And those relationships can be so amazing too."

Amazing would also be a fair description of Kidman and Campion's relationship. For while the two women, who first met when Kidman was a drama student, ended up being unequivocally right for each other, their nearly

three-year association on *Portrait of a Lady* was an emotional seesaw of elation and personal tragedy, total belief in each other's talents and a period of agonizing doubt when Campion nearly yanked the part from her star.

LIKE BETTE DAVIS's in her early starlet days at Warner Bros., Kidman's Hollywood apprenticeship reads like a studio-prescribed regimen of roles designed to show off her versatility: a decorative doctor in *Days of Thunder*, an impetuous gangster's moll in *Billy Bathgate*, a feisty Irish immigrant in *Far and Away*, the nicest woman on Earth in *My Life*, a femme fatale in *Malice*, a sex kitten in *Batman Forever*. If there is a common thread to be found, it is something else she shares with Davis: skillful technique and the ability to evoke emotion with just a glance. Kidman has sometimes been called a cool customer, however. Which is odd when you realize that the other thing her characters have in common is an underlying current of bawdy sexual curiosity.

Talk to her directors and they call her unpretentious, warm, and funny, a driven but committed worker who surrenders herself completely to their vision. "She was a really great ally on the set," says Gus Van Sant, who directed Kidman in *To Die For*. "We never had disagreements. We just mostly had fun. It surprised me how much I was laughing."

In *To Die For*'s Suzanne Stone, Kidman

ROTHSCHILD GROUP: HAIR, SERENA MADARELLI/COUTURE; STYLING: PHILLIP BLOCH/COUTURE; PROP STYLING AND FLOWERS, RICE FLOD/SAMASHIRO PRODUCTIONS; PREVIOUS SPREAD: PANTS, TER ET BANTING; THIS PAGE, RIGHT: KERRY HAYES

“It was kind of like breaking my spirit and putting it back together again,” says Kidman of the auditioning process for ‘Portrait.’

got the character she'd been waiting years to play, one she could sink her teeth into and shake about without fear. The role of the small-town blond—whose psychopathic desire to appear on television compels her to coerce a trio of dim-witted teens into offing her husband—was ferociously pursued by some of the biggest actresses in Hollywood. But Kidman beat the competition by phoning Van Sant at home and making an impassioned speech about how she hoped it would be her *destiny* to play this character—sounding not unlike Suzanne Stone herself, in fact.

Van Sant was rewarded with a delightfully malicious turn from Kidman, and *To Die For's* success silenced naysayers who doubted Kidman's ability to carry a film. It certainly put PolyGram's mind to rest. With more than \$20 million invested in *Portrait of a Lady*, it wants its leading lady in sharp box office form when the film is released. Jane Campion, on the other hand, probably cares more about whether synchronized swimming stays a recognized sport at the next Olympic Games than what an actor's bankability is.

Kidman first came to Campion's attention as a gangly fourteen-year-old performing at the Philip Street Theatre in Sydney, Australia. The New Zealand director instantly fell for her charms and cast Kidman in her graduation film for the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. “She just stood out as having an incredible passion and facility for making things seem immediate and real,” says Campion. When Kidman had to drop out because of exams, Campion sent her a postcard: “It said she hoped to one day direct me in a classic,” Kidman says. “Can you believe that?”

Over the years, the pair occasionally crossed paths. In 1993, the year *The Piano* came out, Campion's postcard prediction looked like it was becoming reality. She wanted to film *Portrait of a Lady*, one of her “two or three favorite novels of all time,” and mentioned to a friend that she might approach Kidman about playing the headstrong but naive Isabel Archer. When Kidman later called Campion to talk about the role, however, Campion's enthusiasm had been dampened by news that Merchant Ivory was planning its own version of *Portrait*. “Well, that's okay,” Kidman told Campion. “They can do theirs and we'll do ours.” “I must say I was quite shocked with her boldness,” says Campion, “and encouraged. I don't think I would have done it if she hadn't made that call.”

With the money in place, Kidman was champing at the bit to start. She was totally

unprepared for the body blow that came next: Campion told her that she was having a crisis of confidence about her ability to play the part. “Which I felt ashamed for,” says Campion. “I think it just came out of—you know, in the time that Nicole was in Hollywood, she'd made quite a few films I didn't think suited her, and I don't think she felt suited her either. I started to feel unconfident about it and felt the only way really for it to work for me was if we did a couple-of-days audition. Which is a terrible thing to tell someone when you basically said, ‘Oh, you can have the part.’”

Kidman was devastated, and there were difficult phone conversations. “And I'd be saying, ‘Well, the way you're talking now is really good. I think that Isabel would be like this,’” says Campion. “It was very confronting, but it created an incredibly real basis for the relationship.”

Cruise recalls this phase of the *Portrait* saga with little fondness. “Jane was wrong about it,” he says sharply. “It was upsetting. We just moved forward. You say, ‘Okay, that's fate. I'm gonna do

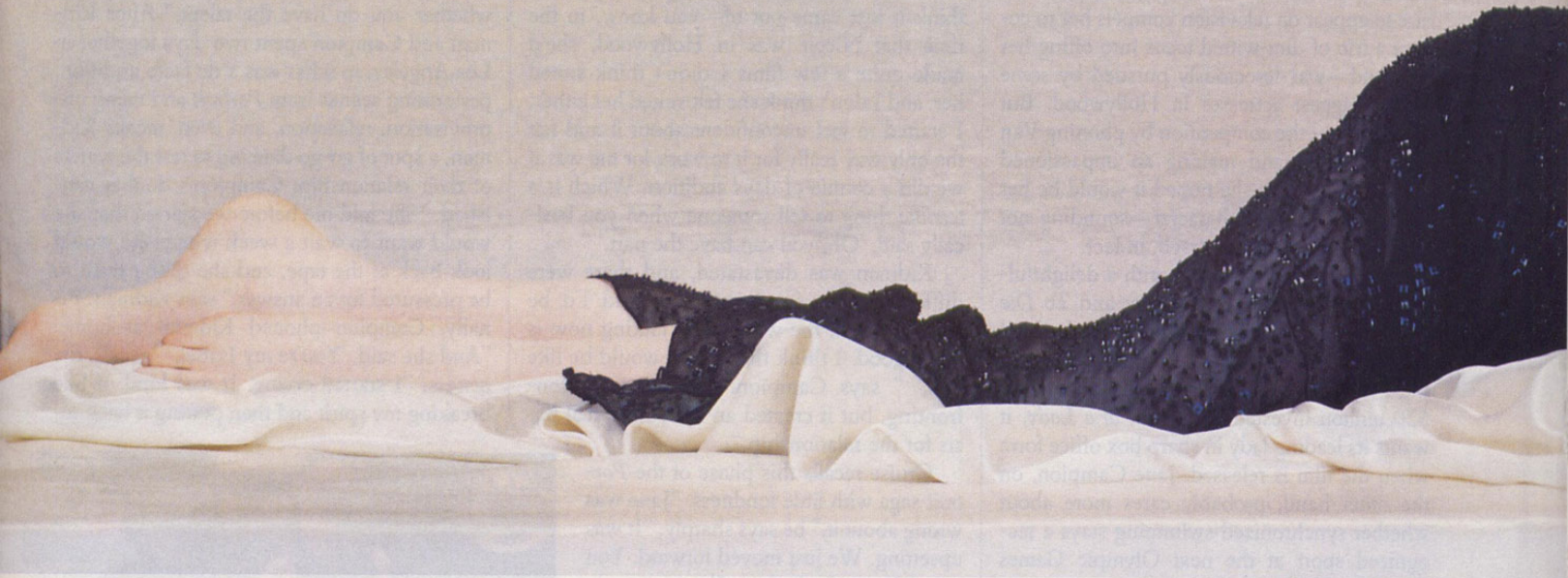
everything I can, but ultimately it's the director's picture.’ But it was very unpleasant.”

“It was really hurtful at first,” says Kidman. “You go through your whole self-doubt as to whether you do have the talent.” After Kidman and Campion spent two days together in Los Angeles, in what was a de facto audition, performing scenes from *Portrait* and using improvisation, relaxation, and even, recalls Kidman, a spot of go-go dancing to test the waters of their relationship, Campion's doubts vanished. “She told me before we started that she would want to wait a week where she would look back at the tape, and she didn't want to be pressured for an answer,” says Kidman. Finally, Campion phoned Kidman at home. “And she said, ‘You're my Isabel,’” recalls the actress. “I started crying. It was kind of like breaking my spirit and then putting it back to-

COUPLINGS: *With George Clooney, right, in next year's The Peacemaker; of Portrait costar John Malkovich, she says, “When he kissed me it was, like, tingles all over my body. But it's legal 'cause it's in a film.”*



"I had my first kiss onstage," she says.
Not to mention her first S&M experience. "I had to yell,
'Beat me! Harder!' every night."



gether, which is what happens to Isabel too. Jane really likes her actresses to desperately, passionately want to be in her films, and she likes to put you through hard work to see if you have the stamina. I know Holly [Hunter, who starred in *The Piano*] has a similar story."

The period between signing on to do the film and actual shooting was a long one. Campion had to finish the script, but she also suffered a devastating personal tragedy in the interim: Her first child, a boy, died shortly after birth. When Campion got pregnant with her second child, Kidman went off to do *To Die For*. (Campion has since given birth to one-and-a-half-year-old Alice.) *Portrait* finally went in front of the cameras at the end of last year, in locations in and around England and Italy, with John Malkovich in the role of Gilbert Osmond, the self-serving dilettante Isabel Archer marries, and Barbara Hershey as her duplicitous friend Madame Merle.

As the shoot progressed, Campion became more and more confident that her instincts about Kidman had been right. "I always thought that, somewhere inside me, I was always best for the part," says Campion with a laugh. "Until about halfway through, when Nicole started doing stuff I couldn't even imagine. She was surprising me and surprising herself. And that's what I wanted for Isabel—to be surprised."

Watching Kidman hit her stride was grat-

ifying, but the actress's devotion to getting things right made her a demanding collaborator later during looping in Sydney. "We had quite a lot to do, because of the big swishy dresses," Campion says, "and she was upset about it because she thought she was going to ruin her performance. She can be quite murderously challenging in her perfectionism. Take Twenty: 'Are you sure that's good enough?' We're going, [wearily] 'Yeah.'"

As exasperating as Kidman's fussiness was at the time, however, Campion is rhapsodic about the final result: "I'm so close to Nicole I can't help thinking she's magnificent," she says. "But other people that have seen it have felt extremely strongly about how much they love her. People say, 'I never thought I'd be able to cry or feel anything when I saw Nicole Kidman do something, but I was weeping for her!'"

HER EARLIEST MEMORY is of eating snow. This was not a hallucination, since she wasn't in Australia at the time. Nor was she in Hawaii, where she had been born three years earlier. She was in Washington, D.C., where her father was pursuing a Ph.D. in biochemistry (he is now also a psychologist), and her parents were throwing snowballs at each other. For elucidation on Kidman's poise, curiosity, tenacity, and height, look no further than

Antony and Janelle Kidman, two independent, left-wing intellectuals who instilled in their two daughters, Nicole and the three-years-younger Antonia, the feeling that life was about taking risks, a credo that Kidman embraced with more gusto than her parents probably anticipated. In fact, when Nicole was sixteen, Janelle Kidman refused to sign a certificate that would have allowed her to sky-dive. When asked if she looks back on any of the things she did then as foolish, Kidman recalls letting a boa constrictor entwine itself around her neck at a black-market snake farm in Thailand. Which, when compared with the carousing she gets up to today—driving around racetracks at 180 mph; sharing her personal space with sharks on scuba-diving expeditions—sounds like a kindergarten outing. "It could have constricted around my neck at any time, and killed me," she says. "I look back on it and think, My God. . . . But I'm glad to have had the experience."

Her early years in Australia—the family moved back when she was three—is the only time Kidman's life could even remotely be called routine. After a childhood regimen of Saturday-morning drama school, her acting talent began to find more fulfilling outlets in her early teens. "I had my first kiss onstage," she says. Not to mention her first S&M experience. "I had to yell, 'Beat me! Harder! Harder! Harder!' every night," says Kidman



of her professional stage debut, in Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, about sexual repression in the late 1800s. Where were her parents? "Away on holiday. My grandmother was looking after us. She really liked it."

So did John Duigan, director of *The Year My Voice Broke* and *Flirting* (in which Kidman has a small part as a snooty schoolgirl), and one of the actress's closest friends today. "You just knew looking at her that she was uniquely talented," says the director, who cast the coltish fourteen-year-old in a children's television drama he was working on. "She was focused in an unusually complete way for a teenager." Before she went Hollywood, Kidman was the Kurt Russell of her generation in Australia, playing freckle-faced tomboys in a string of Disney-style escapades and award-winning miniseries. At sixteen she left home. At seventeen she left Australia, taking the money she'd earned from acting and heading to Amsterdam with her boyfriend, a fellow actor. "When I got over there, I said, 'I really think we should just be friends,'" Kidman says. Did he go for it? "No." She bursts out laughing. "I naively did not understand male sexuality at that age." In an Amsterdam flea market one day, Kidman found the dress that she would eventually get married in, a "very simple but very beautiful" antique brocaded gown from the '30s. She bought her wedding dress several years before she had a

ceremony to wear it to? "I *thought* I was going to marry the guy I was with. And I didn't. Thank God. He'll laugh when he reads that. 'Cause I'm sure he says 'Thank God' too. But I knew it was the dress for me. I hope Isabella will get married in it."

She was back in Australia living with a boyfriend when she learned that her mother had breast cancer. "Suddenly the person that you love most in the world is losing her hair and sobbing every night," says Kidman, who moved back into her parents' house to be close to her mother. "It was very hard on me and it still remains a big thing in my life." While Janelle Kidman was undergoing treatment, Nicole, who became a qualified masseuse, massaged her mother's frozen muscles every day. "I'm very good!" she says. "I tell Tom it was a little bonus [for marrying me]."

KIDMAN DASHES DOWN the dock to board a boat that will take her on a canal tour through the posh London suburb of Little Venice. She is a few minutes late because she was on the phone with Stanley Kubrick, and another canal enthusiast, an American woman, recognizes her as she takes her seat. "Oh, I see," the American barks, under the mistaken assumption that the boat has been held for Kidman. The actress either doesn't hear the comment or she ignores it, and

starts picking at a plate of grapes and cheese. "I am so hungry," she says, reaching over to cut herself a piece of French bread. As the guide warns us to keep our hands inside at all times, the water laps dangerously high up the sides of the boat. "It'll be our luck that we'll go down," Kidman says, laughing merrily. Sunglasses warding off the late-summer sun, she looks around at the arched bridges and narrow houseboats. "This is cool!"

Her hair, which is loosely tied back, is blonder than it has been in any movie. "I remember when I first worked with John Duigan, I had this mass of frizzy, red curls," Kidman says, gesticulating at the more relaxed curls that now adorn her head. "And John said, 'Listen, I find that your hair is distracting from your face and from the performance.' 'Cause there was nothing you could do with it, it was just *wild*. He *hated* my hair." And has her hair been dyed for a film? Kidman arches her eyebrows in shock, reaching over with a plastic water bottle to administer a swift tap to the head. "How *dare* you?" she shrieks, breaking out in convulsive laughter. "We've been on a boat trip in Italy, but this is my color. It's not as red as people think." She pulls one of her curls out for closer inspection, finding the celebrated strawberry mane beneath the sun-bleached exterior. "That's my color. It's *kind* of red." STYLING: SWAIN BITT

Kidman's breakthrough role was in *Dead*

Calm, Phillip Noyce's crackerjack ocean-bound thriller about a couple taking a therapeutic yachting vacation, only to be terrorized by a psycho. The part of the vulnerable wife who's transformed into a ferocious fighter initially called for an older actress; Sam Neill had been cast as the husband. Kidman, then nineteen, worked with a voice and movement coach to pass as a woman in her midtwenties. While her costar Billy Zane was off raising hell, Kidman was tucked into bed every night by 10. "I was going, 'Come on, you're giving me a bad name here—come out and play,'" says Zane. "And I was wishing the whole time I could be doing what he was doing," she says. "But I had to think of being the role. I couldn't be the wild one because that wasn't my character."

Her dedication paid off. The image of her, flaming red hair billowing in the sea breeze, jaw locked in steely determination, fighting for her and her husband's life, was unforgettable, and attracted a flood of attention from agents, directors, and actors looking for leading ladies in big summer blockbusters. "She didn't have to talk about what her ambitions were. It was evident," says Zane. "And you knew that whatever she set her sights on—I wouldn't say she would *get*, it was a little more elegant than that. It would *come*. She was a magnet for good fortune."

She was at a film festival in Japan when she first got the call that Tom Cruise wanted to meet her for *Days of Thunder*. "I thought, Oh yeah, right," she says. "I'd been to America before. You go in, you audition, you don't get the job." But hey, she thought to herself, free trip to L.A.! So off she went, with vague plans to crash for a couple weeks at the Chateau Marmont with Phillip Noyce and his family before heading off to London, where her sister was living. Cruise and Kidman never tire of describing that first meeting as lust at first sight. "I've never been affected by somebody to that degree," she says. "It was very scary. Because you know that there's almost no going back."

About the time *Days of Thunder* began shooting, Cruise released a terse statement announcing his separation from actress Mimi Rogers. Less than a year later, Nicole Kidman wore her flea-market fashion discovery in a Christmas Eve ceremony in Telluride, Colorado. "I was surprised when she told me she was marrying Tom Cruise," says Duigan, who now counts Cruise as a very good friend. "I did have some misgivings about it, purely because she's a close friend of mine. It would

be like, in England, a close friend saying that they were dating Prince Charles. Tom was an unknown quantity as far as I was concerned."

The Kidman-Cruise marriage is now in its sixth year. The couple is so famous that they sometimes have to resort to extreme measures to do ordinary things, like sightseeing. "Tom and I went to Rome, and the way we see Rome is we sleep during the day and go out at night, at 2 A.M., when it's much quieter and darker," says Kidman. "He climbed into the Colosseum illegally, climbed over those huge



ON THE RUN: *About life with husband Tom Cruise, Kidman says, "I like that feeling of 'Where are we gonna go next?'"*

bars with spikes. I was screaming, 'What are you doing?'" Their partnership has been a media spectacle that would unnerve even the most iron-willed, and in the early years Cruise's light shone so brightly it stifled Kidman's own identity—through no fault of his. "I was just the *wife*," says Kidman, who has had to fight for every important role she's gotten despite speculation that her marriage was a good career move. "I had a strong sense of who I was, but in an industry where it's all based on how much your latest movie made, you'd be at a party and the whole conversation would be directed at him; even though you're both sitting there, nobody makes eye contact with you. You're just *there*."

Worse than being ignored, however, is being accused of being a liar. The level of cyni-

cism about their relationship reaches Himalayan dimensions. Is Cruise gay? Is it a marriage of convenience? They can be as gushing as they like about each other in print, but the rumors persist. The couple's involvement in the Church of Scientology and adoption of their children only seems to add fuel to the fire. "We just go, Who gives a fuck?" says Kidman. "In 30 years time, we'll be marr . . . I mean, time will tell."

By all accounts, the couple have an amazing rapport with each other. "If you get Nicole and Tom telling a story together," says Kidman's mother, Janelle, "you laugh till tears run down your face." John Duigan says, "It's normal for elements of personality to get on the nerves of couples who live together day to day. I haven't seen those signs yet [with them]."

"He fascinates me still," says Kidman. "There is still an unpredictable quality to our relationship. I don't know if that comes from two people that have their own lives. But, put it this way, it doesn't feel like seven years to me at all. I can sit with him and know what he's thinking from a glance. Another time I can look at him and think, My God, I would never have thought that he would say that, or react that way."

One way he does react, with more frequency than he or Kidman would like, is with legal blitzkriegs against publications that encroach on the couple's privacy or publish false stories. Germany's *Bunte* magazine was recently faced with a \$60 million lawsuit filed by Cruise over a fabricated quote that had him confessing to sterility. They printed a front-cover retraction. Cruise dropped the suit. The questions about adoption, however, get Kidman spitting venom.

"I have two children that are the most exquisite creatures," she says angrily. "Whether I give birth to a child or not, it's not even an element that exists now. If more are added to the family, more will be, but that's a very personal thing. It isn't anybody else's business."

Kidman has the same hopes for her children that any mother does. There are certain things, however, that she knows she'll never be able to give her kids. "When we go to my parents', Isabella and I sleep in the same bed that I was in as a child, and my dad'll be in the kitchen with the radio on the same way that I would hear him when I was small, and my mom will come and start the washing machine at 7 in the morning. I'm always trying to create my childhood for Isabella and failing at it because we're (Continued on page 120)

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NICOLE KIDMAN

(Continued from page 84)

moving all the time. I had friends that I'd known since I was four years old, and I have to realize that Isabella isn't going to have that. I can try and make it similar, but it's never going to be the same. And that's sad."

MAKING PORTRAIT, KIDMAN was in a constant state of unrest. By the end of the shoot, she was also ill. "I was playing an abused wife," she says over lunch at Simpson's-in-the-Strand, a grand old English dining establishment catering to bankers and royals. "You feel a lot of shame when you go home at night because of the things that are being done to you when you're on the set. It was very . . . humiliating. And I started to live Isabel. As much as you say, No, no, it enters into your psyche, and you're not aware of how much until after you finish."

Janelle Kidman worries that her daughter drives herself too hard. "She takes on too much. Sometimes I think she's a bit frail. She probably won't like me saying that. She's fit, but . . . You know, there are people that know when to stop and look after themselves a bit more."

But Kidman can't stop at the moment. She fit in the shoot of *The Peacemaker* this summer, playing a nuclear physicist opposite George Clooney's elite commando. She would like to get her university degree, in English Literature. And there's also that little project with Kubrick to think about. As Kidman tells it, the director contacted the couple simultaneously via fax, saying he was working on a script called *Eyes Wide Shut* and would they be interested? A few months later he sent the script to Cruise. He "flipped over it," says Kidman, "and then I read it five days later. And then we had to give the script back. And that was it. It's done." She taps her knife on her plate twice for emphasis.

Eyes Wide Shut, with a script by Frederic Raphael (*Daisy Miller*) and Kubrick, will be only the thirteenth feature film Kubrick has directed in his 40-year-plus career. A fiercely private recluse, Kubrick is renowned for his technical virtuosity and storytelling skills, and many actors have given the performance of their life in his movies. (Think James Mason and Shelley Winters in *Lolita*, Malcolm McDowell in *A Clockwork Orange*, Peter Sellers in *Dr. Strangelove*.) "When you work with Stanley, you live the way he wants you to live," says Kidman, who plans to emulate Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon's decision on *Dead Man Walking* to be as separate as possible during the shoot. "I mean, obviously we're gonna live in the same house. We have the kids and stuff, but within that comes a lot of space. Stanley deals with us completely separately."

Some former colleagues have been less than fond in their recollections of working with Kubrick, a tireless perfectionist who demands and receives total creative control. Leonard Rosenman, composer on *Barry Lyndon*, once reportedly tried to strangle the director after he put the film's orchestra through more than 100 takes; and actress Shelley Duvall, who also has a role in *Portrait of a Lady*, has said that her experience on *The Shining* played havoc with her sanity. ("I think it's really nice that [Cruise and Kidman] are working together again," says Duvall. "And with Stanley, you know, they can comfort one another.") But Kubrick is also one of the most extraordinary filmmaking talents alive. Who wouldn't surrender a bit of sanity to work with him?

"It kind of hasn't sunk in yet," says Kidman. "But just to have that opportunity as an actor, to be directed by him, to be in his film, is just, Wow. I think that's when you say, 'Okay, after this I'm taking a break.' Because I went from Jane Campion to Stanley Kubrick, and it was incredible. It can only go down from there." And she erupts in peals of all-encompassing laughter. ■

Matt Mueller is a contributing editor of *British PREMIERE*.