



**'I'M SETTLED,  
I'M HAPPY,  
I'M A BORING  
CHURCH MOUSE'**

Boring? We beg to differ. As for a church mouse? Hardly. But Drew Barrymore is certainly settled, happy and at the very top of her career game. Helena de Bertodano meets the charmingly grounded star

**R**arely has the repertoire of an actress so accurately mirrored her real life. From her early appearance in *E.T.*, aged six, through her wild-child years to the romcoms of her twenties, Drew Barrymore has

literally grown up – emotionally and physically – in front of us.

'I think you pick films that reflect what you're going through in life,' says Barrymore thoughtfully. 'For a while I was a bad girl so I did bad-girl roles. And in my twenties I was so into fantasy and how to make fairy tales a reality – >>



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so I did the romcoms and the happily-ever-afters. I really wanted that for myself... Now I'm very settled in my life, I'm very married, I'm not searching for love...'

So in her latest movie, *Miss You Already*, Barrymore plays the best friend of a woman diagnosed with terminal cancer – played by Toni Collette. Poignant and funny, it is a gutsy performance that shows off Barrymore's remarkable range as an actress. In the movie, her character, Jess – who is happily married – is struggling to have a baby, a plight that creates a gulf with her friend Milly, who is very sick but nonetheless behaves badly towards her friends and family. 'I think I probably would have been a lot more like Milly at another time in my life – tough and a bit naughty. But I'm more like Jess now – grounded and pragmatic,' says Barrymore.

We meet at an Italian restaurant in West Hollywood, which has a retro vibe with red and white checked tablecloths and leather furnishings. Dimly lit with no interior windows, it feels like night-time on this sunny day. Barrymore has picked the venue, partly because she has heard they have good salads and partly because it is near her optometrist, where she has an appointment after our lunch. She arrives dressed in a pink Hawaiian shirt and ripped jeans, tapping away on her phone about babysitting

arrangements (she has two young daughters – Olive, three, and Frankie, one – with her husband Will Kopelman, an art consultant). 'I have become a Filofax,' she grumbles good-humouredly. With her hair tied back in a ponytail and without a scrap of make-up, she looks much younger than her 40 years as she flashes her familiar lopsided smile.

'It's incredibly nice to meet you,' she says, so exuberantly that I can't help but warm to her immediately. Although we are almost the only people in the restaurant, she chooses a booth tucked away in the corner: 'I'm sensitive to conversation being overheard,' explains Barrymore, who knows more than most people about being scrutinised. As we sit down, her phone rings – it is her co-star Toni Collette calling to discuss their upcoming holiday. 'I can't wait,' she effuses to Collette, 'it's going to be the fucking best.'

'She feels like a sister now,' explains Barrymore, who as usual has let the fictional world shape her real one. 'Right away we just unzipped and developed the electric connection.'

Grounded and pragmatic: not adjectives one would have used of the Barrymore of yesteryear. Following international stardom as young Gertie in *E.T.*, her world spiralled out of control and at first it looked >>

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as though she was going to be relegated to history as a typical child-actor disaster story. Her battles with alcohol and drugs are well documented, not least by her. In her autobiography *Little Girl Lost*, she wrote: 'I had my first drink at age nine, began smoking marijuana at 10 and at 12 took up cocaine.' A couple of years later, following a suicide attempt and a couple of stints in rehab, she was labelled a has-been. Yet against the odds, she bounced back with a series of movies, including *Poison Ivy* and *Bad Girls*, and developed a reputation for outrageous, unpredictable behaviour, a sort of Miley Cyrus of the 1990s. In 1994, she posed nude for *Playboy*, then in 1995, during a television interview with David Letterman, she jumped on to his desk and flashed her breasts at him to wish him happy birthday.

'Most people go through an experimental phase in their lives but it isn't public,' muses Barrymore. 'I had to learn a lot of lessons on my own. But I was never a bad person; I never fucked anyone over. I feel very lucky that it happened then.'

This is a much worse world to go through anything like that. I'm like a quiet, boring church mouse now.'

For those of us who remember watching *E.T.* as children, it is almost as if we have grown up with her. 'You did!' she exclaims. But because so many people feel like that, she is greeted with a degree of familiarity that few celebrities experience. 'I'm Norm from *Cheers*,' says Barrymore. 'I walk into a place and everyone says, "Hi, Norm."' She shrugs: 'It's just what my life is.'

Barrymore had planned to take a break from acting when she was sent the script of *Miss You Already*. 'I was reading the script with my newborn in my arms and I was like, "I don't even have time to read this, how am I ever going to have time to [act] this?" Physically I was not in the right place, but [my character] was pregnant and giving birth and it just felt tonally right to try to fit this in somehow.'

Despite the tragedy underscoring the script, there are moments of real humour and it is, ultimately, a feel-good movie. 'I loved that it wasn't a sappy cry-fest,' agrees Barrymore. Rather, the characters bounce off each other. 'It was more like, "Oh my God, I'm so irritated with you today. I have been cleaning up your shit for a year and a half, and today I don't feel like it.'"

Barrymore asks for an iced tea ('no sugar, no lemon') and studies the menu, at a loss for what to order. I tell

her I'm going to have the tomato and mozzarella salad. 'Ooh, I'm going to get that too,' she says, snapping the menu shut. 'Who doesn't like cheese and tomato?'

Born into an acting dynasty, Barrymore's childhood was anything but normal. Her grandfather was the legendary screen actor John Barrymore; Barrymore's own father, also called John, was likewise an actor. An alcoholic and drug addict, he abandoned Barrymore and her mother Jaid, the daughter of Hungarian refugees, when she was just a baby.

Towards the end of his life (he died of cancer in 2004), Barrymore moved him closer to her and paid his medical bills. 'I somehow intuitively understood as a very young child that he was incapable of being anything but this shoeless, selfish hippy, and weirdly it didn't bother me. Spending time with him before he died felt like a gift: I always thought he was a very cool, interesting, entertaining, intriguing creature. I was like, "I dig you, you're not a dad by any sense of the word, but you're a unique person.'"

The same cannot be said of her mother, with whom

Barrymore has a tricky relationship. '[My mother] is a different subject. But all is well and things are convivial and pleasant.' I ask if her mother has met her children and Barrymore politely stonewalls: 'I just can't even talk about her if that's okay.'

For someone who has been through so much in life, Barrymore seems remarkably undamaged. 'It's a choice – you either cower in a corner or you choose strength and happiness.' She goes out of her way to make everyone around her feel comfortable, even listening politely to the restaurant manager's story about someone who knew someone who knew her. I tell her that I thought she might have a publicist sitting in on the interview, a bit of a trend these days. Barrymore makes a face: 'That is so lame. What's the point? I don't even have a publicist.'

When she was 11 months old, her mother took her to her first audition – for a dog-food commercial. The dog bit Barrymore, and when she reacted by laughing, she was given the role. Her earliest memories are of being on sets. One imagines a glamorous childhood: meeting famous people, going to private screenings in grand Hollywood homes, but Barrymore says it was the antithesis of that. 'I grew up in a single-mother household in West >>

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Hollywood, we had no money, we lived in a little duplex a couple of blocks away from here.'

At 15 she was granted legal emancipation from her parents and found other parental role models. 'Luckily I've been given the gift of great taste in people,' says Barrymore, who considers her great friend Cameron Diaz a sister, as well as Collette. 'All the people I ask advice from and admire are incredibly sane, grounded people.'

During the filming of *E.T.*, director Steven Spielberg also became a sort of surrogate father to her: 'It was one of the most loving and encouraging and fun and adventurous things I've ever got to do in my life with such a safe group of people, led by the most wonderful man. It was really just a perfect world. It was the last time life was quite unquote normal.' They still see each other regularly. 'When he's with my kids,' enthuses Barrymore, 'it's the greatest thing in the world.'

She describes herself as the opposite of her own parents, saying that they gave her a blueprint of how not to raise a child. 'I don't know if I'm a good mother but I know I give everything to it, every day.'

With more than 50 movies under her belt ('I've lost count'), Barrymore has no qualms about taking a break to concentrate on her children. 'I'm making certain choices and they're very easy to make.' Nonetheless, she still oversees the production company she set up, Flower Films – which produced *Charlie's Angels* and *Donnie Darko* – as well as an award-winning cosmetics company, Flower Beauty, not yet available in the UK. 'They both challenge my business side – which I really have,' she says. 'Having a film company was very important to me for 20 years and the beauty company is very fitting to raising girls and thinking about what women want.'

Barrymore was married twice very briefly in the past – to Welsh bar owner Jeremy Thomas in 1994, then to comedian Tom Green in 2001. She met Kopelman many years ago and dated him briefly then. 'It was nice because when I re-met him I was like, "Oh, I feel I know you a little bit." Before it wasn't the right time. Timing is everything...' She says she would not rule out having more children: 'Never say never!'

Now Barrymore is likely to be found curled up on a sofa in the evening. 'The perfect evening for me is something I call VCR – vino, couch and remote. I love one glass of wine at the end of the day – that's all it takes and I'm shnookey. Sometimes we'll go out on a date night – like a ramen adventure, it's always food-oriented – and then every once in a while we'll find ourselves out at something, dressed up, and I'm like, "Holy shit, this feels special."'

If Barrymore had the power to change anything about her past, what would it be? 'Probably everything,' she replies with a wry laugh, 'but if you're happy with your life today, you have to be appreciative of every single moment that led you to get here.'

*Miss You Already* is out on September 25th

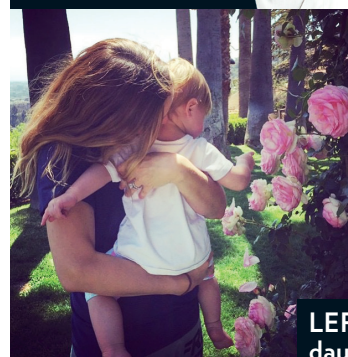
See Drew Barrymore's best screen moments at [REDONLINE.CO.UK](http://REDONLINE.CO.UK)



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: Barrymore in *Poison Ivy*, 1992; in *E.T.*, 1982; and with Lucy Liu and Cameron Diaz in *Charlie's Angels*, 2000



CLOCKWISE, FROM ABOVE: With husband Will Kopelman; as a child with mother Jaid; and with close friend Cameron Diaz



LEFT: With youngest daughter Frankie



Her *Miss You Already* co-star Toni Collette 'feels like a sister now', says Barrymore

Photographs: The Kobal Collection, Alistar, Rex Features, Getty Images, Instagram/Drew Barrymore