

times2

# 'Some very beautiful people get all types of roles, why shouldn't I?'

**Diane Kruger made her name as the face that launched a thousand ships, but still feels her looks limit the parts she gets, she tells Helena de Bertodano**

It is a decade since Diane Kruger launched her Hollywood acting career — as well as a thousand ships — playing a highly decorative Helen to Orlando Bloom's Paris in the epic war movie *Troy*. "I looked great, I guess, but it wasn't much of a part," she says dismissively today. "Ten years later I'd rather kill myself than [weep] over Orlando Bloom."

A former model and dancer, the German-born Kruger now has well over 30 film and TV credits to her name. Her role as a duplicitous actress-turned-spy in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) won her a nomination for a Screen Actors Guild Award, proving that she could act as well as look beautiful.

Now she stars as the strong-willed police officer Sonya Cross in the successful American crime-drama television series *The Bridge* (based on the Danish/Swedish original) and is the protagonist of *A Perfect Plan*, a French romantic comedy. "It's hard to find something where the women are not just the protagonists but are also funny," she says. "As a grown woman, I didn't want to for ever be the enabler of some male storyline. I think we have stories to tell too and they are important stories."

We meet in Soho House, the private members' club in West Hollywood, and the moment we sit down are asked for ID and a credit card. "In case we run away or something?" asks

Kruger sarcastically, rolling her eyes. She is sharp and funny; there is a refreshing no-nonsense directness to her manner. "I'm very type-A," she says. "I know what I like and I know what I don't like. My friends say I'm very German: we're efficient and cut out the emotional bulls\*\*\*. If you've got to go from A to B you don't want to talk about C, you just want to get to f\*\*\*ing B."

Kruger is laughing as she speaks — in a gentle American accent that bears almost no trace of German. She is pretty but not intimidatingly so. Far more natural than the usual highly groomed Hollywood actress, her hair looks like it hasn't seen a brush for a while and she wears no make-up. She is dressed quirkily in a shapeless striped T-shirt, leather shorts and purple spotted heels. And instead of drinking mineral water or herbal tea she orders a glass of pinot grigio.

In *A Perfect Plan*, Kruger plays a woman convinced that if she marries her long-term boyfriend the union will fail, following a family trend of first marriages always ending in divorce. So she comes up with an elaborate plan to persuade a random man to marry her, in order quickly to divorce him and marry the man she really loves. This being a typically French comedy, events don't go according to plan.

Kruger's own first marriage — to the French actor Guillaume Canet — ended in divorce, and she has been with her current boyfriend, the



“I didn't want to for ever be the enabler of some male storyline

Canadian-American actor Joshua Jackson, for eight years. They live together in Hollywood but she says she has no plans to marry again: "I'm not so into marriage, I don't have the dream of the white dress. I got married at 21 and realised that the paper didn't mean anything. We married for all the right reasons in theory. It was romantic and I still love him, I think he is a great guy, but clearly that wasn't enough for us to be together for ever."

But, she adds: "I do believe in the commitment and the romance and the idea that there is one person for

you. My grandparents have been married 65 years. They're hysterical: they're 93 and 90 and both deaf so they yell at each other, but he still gets up every morning to make her breakfast. I like that idea. I don't know if that's going to happen to me — clearly 65 years seems unlikely at this point [she is nearly 38]."

A few days before we meet, Kruger was snapped wearing what looked like an engagement ring. "I feel like I've gotten engaged ten times over the past year," she jokes of the constant press speculation. And at one point she catches herself referring to Jackson as her husband: "We've been together so long it feels redundant to say boyfriend at this point, although I do like it because it puts him in his place."

Her own parents divorced when Kruger was 13, largely because of her father's alcoholism. "I don't remember him being sober. I never experienced him as a dad and I saw how my mom struggled. I was so angry."

She has had no contact with her father for years. "I'm not angry any more. Nothing's black and white. I don't hate him but you have to make a positive decision of who you want in your life and why they are in your life."

Growing up in the village of Algermissen, Kruger attended a local Catholic school, which put her off religion for life. "I just thought it was all bulls\*\*\*. It felt like a fraud. My main teacher was a nun who later left the church and came out as a lesbian."

To escape her turbulent home life, Kruger turned to dance ("ballet was a great outlet"), but as a teenager realised she would never make it as a prima ballerina. "My body changed: there are certain body





types that no matter what you do, you are not as flexible.”

At first she thought modelling would fill the gap left by ballet, and in 1992 she represented Germany in the Elite Model Look competition, before leaving school to model full-time. “I moved to Paris at 15 — I still can’t believe my mom let me do that. I felt like she gave me the wings.”

Although she was very successful — she did advertisements for Yves Saint Laurent, Chanel, Christian Dior — the work bored her: “Modelling is very one-note in comparison to [dancing].” So she started taking acting lessons in Paris and landed small roles in a few French movies before starring in her then-husband’s directorial debut, *Mon Idole*. Soon she caught the attention of Hollywood and in the same year as taking on *Troy* also starred with Nicolas Cage in *National Treasure*.

Since then she has worked almost non-stop and recently finished

“There are five good female roles a year and 200 going after them

shooting *Fathers and Daughters*, playing “an alcoholic trophy wife” opposite Russell Crowe, but she says it is still a struggle to get worthwhile parts. “Eighty-five per cent of the time you hear ‘No’. There are only about five really good roles for women per year and there are 200 actresses going after the same part.”

She seems to play a wide variety of roles but still feels she is typecast. “I’d be kidding myself to think I’m not. It’s very frustrating. I see my body and my face as tools to convey emotions. I know what I can feel and what I

would do. There are some very beautiful people who get all types of roles. Look at Angelina Jolie — she’s one of the most beautiful people in the world and yet she seems to get all the roles she feels passionate about.”

One solution, of course, is to come up with your own material: Kruger is hoping to produce a movie about the life of Hedy Lamarr, an Austrian actress and inventor, perhaps starring as Lamarr herself. “She was a very famous movie star in the late Thirties and early Forties but she was also very smart and invented ‘frequency-hopping’ [a method of transmitting radio signals], which is still used today. She was very ‘mommy dearest’, a horrible person: fascinating but crazy. I am just about to sign a director.”

Until recently Kruger did not want to have children. “I didn’t think I wanted kids until a couple of years ago. Now I hope it is for me, but who knows — by the time I really try,

**Diane Kruger in Cannes in 2011 and, left, with her partner Joshua Jackson. Far left: starring with Dany Boon in *A Perfect Plan***



Watch the trailer for the US remake of *The Bridge* tablet editions and [thetimes.co.uk/film](http://thetimes.co.uk/film)

maybe it won’t happen. I think people put so much pressure on women [to have children], as if they were not complete otherwise.”

Although she is papped a lot, she says that in Hollywood terms she is relatively unknown. “I’m not Brad Pitt. I can definitely go incognito.”

Occasionally she has to deal with weirdly obsessive fans, such as the one who recently turned up on her grandfather’s doorstep in Germany with a package. “My grandfather misunderstood and thought it was a present from me. It was some chocolates and a locked metal box with a message saying ‘The key will arrive in Hollywood in March.’

Grandpa was like: ‘Can I at least eat the chocolates since you’re not coming home?’ I was like: ‘Do not eat the f\*\*\*ing chocolates!’”

Later a man tried to get into the Oscars, telling security he had to deliver a key to Kruger: the key chain had Kruger’s name and German home address on it. “Three detectives showed up at my house at three in the morning.” The same man was picked up on surveillance camera ringing her doorbell. “They’re still trying to find [the man].” As for the box, her grandfather did forward it and Josh broke it open. “A cellphone was wired

“I feel like I’ve gotten engaged ten times over the past year

to the lock and the minute it opened, it turned on. It was like a bad movie. Josh threw it away thinking a bomb was going to go off but I think it was just some crazy weird fan who was going to call me.”

*The Bridge* is now in its second season: “It’s becoming darker and grittier. We’re no longer following the original — it’s very up-to-date with American politics and the immigration-cartel issue.” She says she has something in common with Cross, her character. “She has Asperger’s, which means she’s socially a little awkward and can come across as very brusque; a lot of people feel Germans are brusque — I think I’m more diplomatic than her but I understand her thought process.”

Kruger describes herself as a workaholic who finds it hard to relax. “I think it would be good for me to learn to waste time. I’ve gotten better over the years but it’s not my most likable feature. I give notes on everything, I drive my f\*\*\*ing show-runner crazy. My partner is much more relaxed and laid back, so when I’m in a good place that works, but when I’m not, I’m like: ‘Do something — why hasn’t this been done?’”

Slowly, she says, she is learning to get her priorities right: “I have finally learnt that no role is ever going to be as interesting as my own life, and it’s for me to make the life I want. It’s not a f\*\*\*ing part that I’m going to get.”

So tonight, for a start, she is going out on the town with a friend. “Josh is away so I’m free,” she says, draining her pinot grigio. “I’m going to a gay bar to play darts.” Even there, though, she won’t completely relax. “I’m very competitive,” she laughs. “I will have to win.”

***A Perfect Plan* is in cinemas June 13**